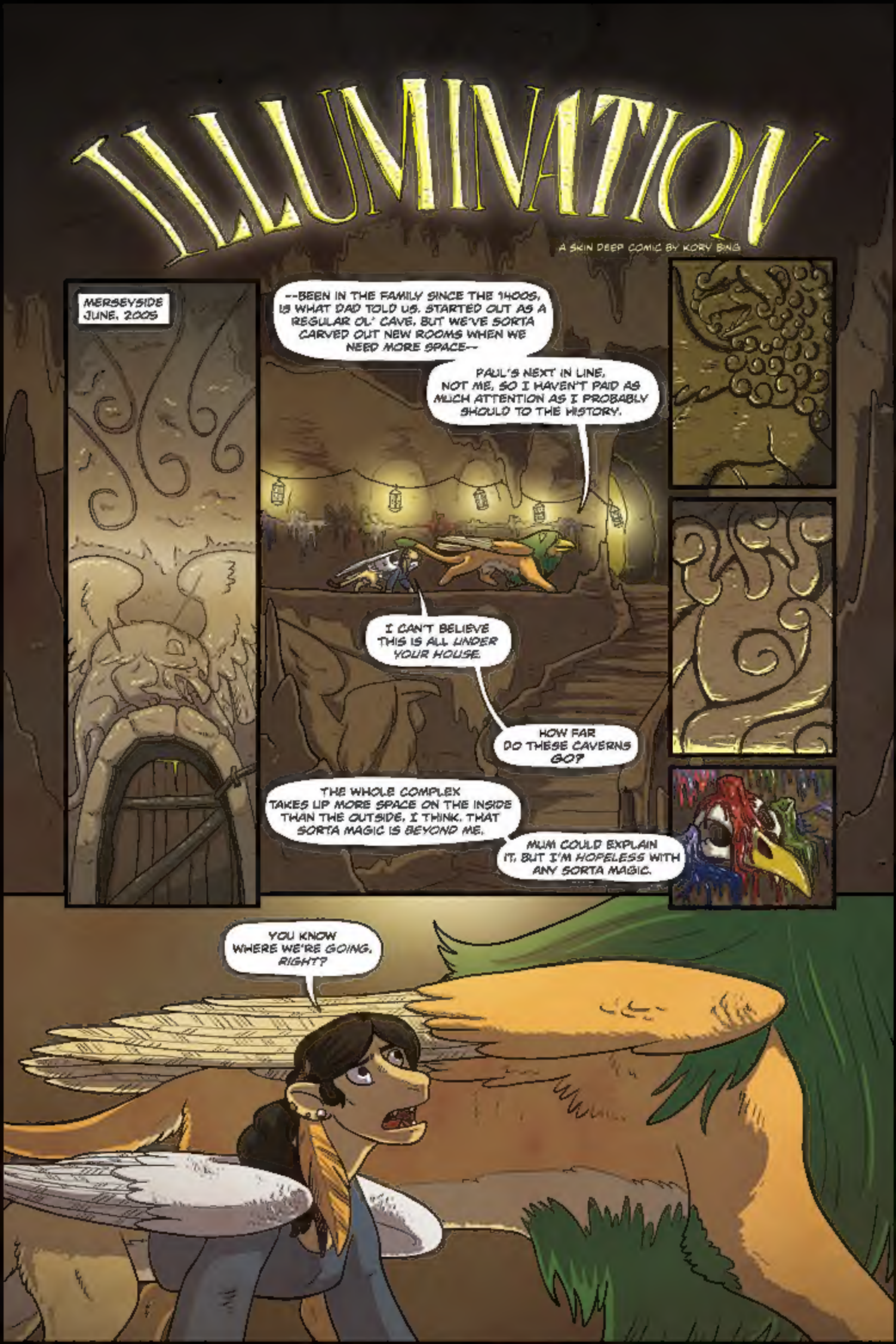
ILLUMINATION

A SKIN DEEP COMIC BY KORY BING


MERSEYSIDE
JUNE, 2005
--BEEN IN THE FAMILY SINCE THE 1400S, IS WHAT DAD TOLD US. STARTED OUT AS A REGULAR OL' CAVE, BUT WE'VE SORTA CARVED OUT NEW ROOMS WHEN WE NEED MORE SPACE--
PAUL'S NEXT IN LINE. NOT ME, SO I HAVEN'T PAID AS MUCH ATTENTION AS I PROBABLY SHOULD TO THE HISTORY.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS ALL UNDER YOUR HOUSE.
HOW FAR DO THESE CAVERNS GO?
THE WHOLE COMPLEX TAKES UP MORE SPACE ON THE INSIDE THAN THE OUTSIDE, I THINK. THAT SORTA MAGIC IS BEYOND ME.
MUM COULD EXPLAIN IT, BUT I'M HOPELESS WITH ANY SORTA MAGIC.
YOU KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING, RIGHT?

YEH! THE TOMB WE'RE GOING TO IS PART OF THE ORIGINAL CAVERNS. I USED TO PLAY IN THERE A LOT WHEN I WAS A CUB.

I KNOW EXACTLY WHERE IT IS!

WHY ON EARTH WOULD YOU *PLAY* IN A *TOMB*?

WHY *WOULDN'T* I?

IT'S NOT JUST ANY TOMB, THIS IS *PHINEAS THE RED* WE'RE TALKING ABOUT! THERE WOULDN'T BE ANY FINNS AT ALL WITHOUT HIM!

HE WAS MY HERO WHEN I WAS YOUNGER. I READ EVERYTHING WE HAD INVOLVING HIM OR HIS DAUGHTER, *PHINEAS II*.

WHY'S THAT?

WHY DO YOU THINK HE WAS CALLED *"PHINEAS THE RED?"*

THAT USUALLY MEANS *RED HAIR*, RIGHT?

AND PHINEAS II IS SOMETIMES CALLED *"PHINEAS THE GREEN."*

DID THEY HAVE...

WHATEVER IT IS YOU HAVE?

THE *FINN CURSE*, IS WHAT WE CALL IT.

I'M THE FIRST TO HAVE IT IN, WELL, *NOBODY* CAN REALLY REMEMBER THE LAST TIME ANYONE HAD IT.

KNOWING THAT THE PROGENITORS OF MY ENTIRE FAMILY MIGHT HAVE HAD THE CURSE HELPED ME GET THROUGH SOME HARD TIMES WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER.

WHAT CAUSES THE CURSE?

HELL IF I KNOW. IT'S NOT MUCH OF A CURSE, YOU KNOW?

OUTSIDE OF THE *HAIR* AND THE *HEIGHT* AND THE *WEIRD LOOKS*, THERE'S NOT MUCH ELSE.

I THINK IT'S JUST CALLED A 'CURSE' BECAUSE NOBODY REALLY KNOWS WHAT IT IS.

HERE WE ARE!

OH. WOW.

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I REALLY HOPE THIS IS THE PHINEAS MY DAD OR HIS GHOST OR WHATEVER TOLD ME ABOUT IN THAT DREAM, OR ELSE WE'VE COME A LONG WAY FOR NOTHING.
THERE ARE WORSE WAYS TO SPEND A SUMMER THAN USING MY OWN MONEY TO FLY ME MATES TO SEE MY MAGICAL HOMELAND.
YOU MEAN YOUR PARENTS' MONEY.
I FAIL TO SEE A DIFFERENCE!

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SHOW ME THAT AGAIN!!
WHAT DID YOU SEE?
I DON'T KNOW!
IT WAS JUST A BUNCH OF PICTURES!
SOME GUY I GUESS WAS PHINEAS? A BUNCH OF BIRDS, AND LIKE, AN INCENSE BURNER OR SOMETHING??
I. DON'T.
KNOW!
COME ON!
MICHELLE...
I DIDN'T SUPPRESS A PANIC ATTACK TO GET THROUGH AIRPORT SECURITY AND A FRIGGIN' MILLION HOUR PLANE RIDE JUST TO GET MORE CRYPTIC BS!!
MICHELLE!
THIS IS STILL WAY MORE THAN YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO GET FOR MONTHS, RIGHT?
SOMETHING HAPPENED. THAT MEANS WE'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK, YEAH?

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--AN' I'M GONNA GET TO GO TO A SCHOOL FULL OF REAL PEOPLE--
COLIN, DON'T GO CALLING HUMANS *REAL* PEOPLE.
WE RAISED YOU BETTER THAN THAT.
THE POINT IS, I'LL GET TO MAKE FRIENDS AND WEAR TROUSERS AND BE NORMAL!
COLIN, YOU'RE ALREADY NORMAL, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE!
HE'S JUST EXCITED, MARY.
MERIAL! GREG! TELL ME WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE HUMAN!!
COLIN JAMES FINN, THAT IS NOT HOW WE ADDRESS GUESTS!
NOW GET YOUR MANNERS STRAIGHT THIS INSTANT, OR ELSE YOU'RE OFF TO YOUR ROOM FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT!
SORRY MISS MCMINNUS. MISTER TRAGOS.

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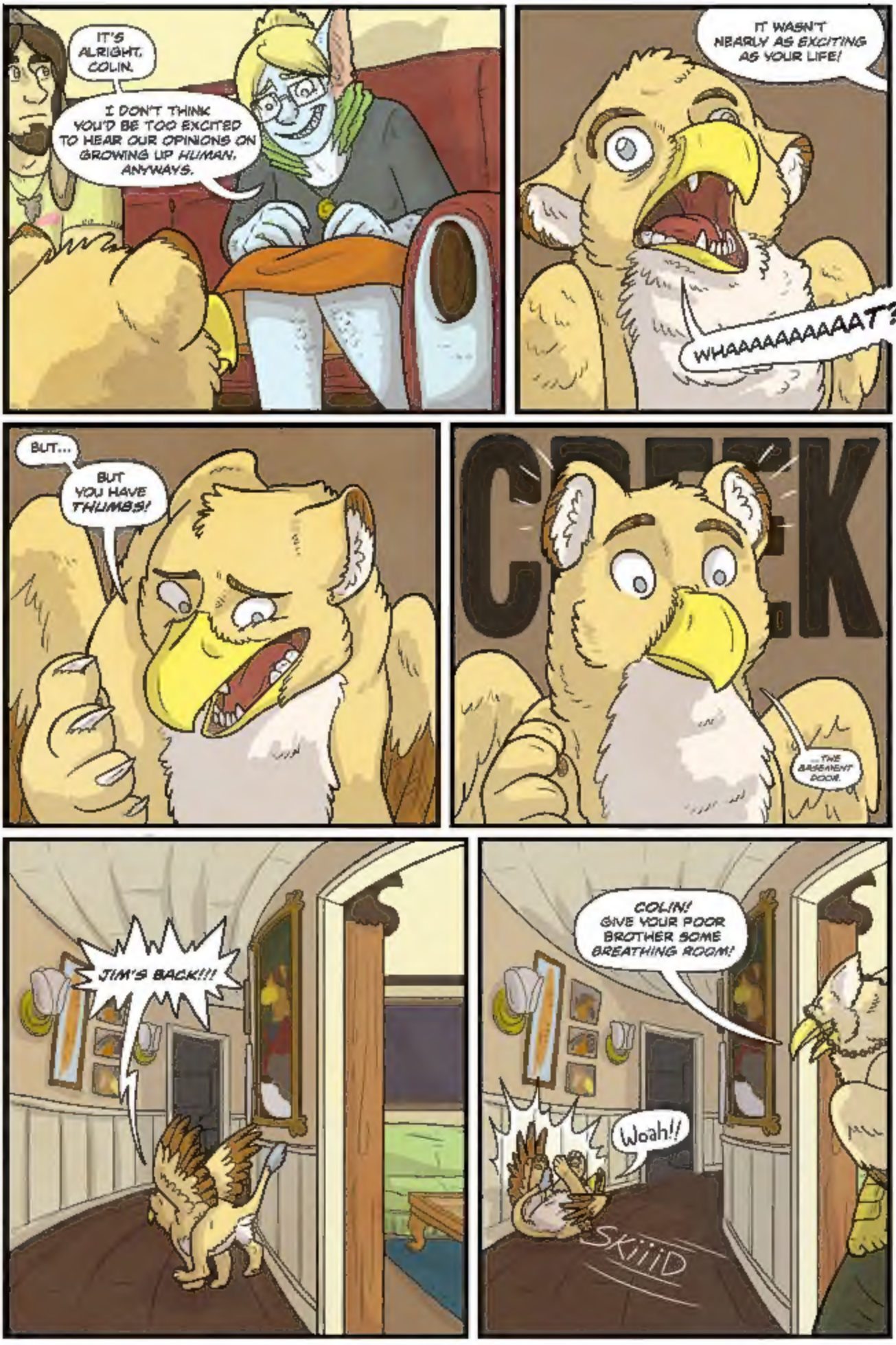
IT'S ALRIGHT, COLIN.
I DON'T THINK YOU'D BE TOO EXCITED TO HEAR OUR OPINIONS ON GROWING UP HUMAN, ANYWAYS.
IT WASN'T NEARLY AS EXCITING AS YOUR LIFE!
WHAAAAAAAAAAT?
BUT...
BUT YOU HAVE THUMBS!
CREEK
...THE BASEMENT DOOR.
JIM'S BACK!!!
COLIN! GIVE YOUR POOR BROTHER SOME BREATHING ROOM!
Woah!!
SKIIID

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I APOLOGIZE FOR HIM. HE JUST LOVES TO ACT UP FOR COMPANY.
NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE, RIGHT GREG?
HMM? OH, YEAH. UH HUH.
DOES THAT MEAN MICHELLE'S BACK, TOO?
JIM'S BACK JIM'S BACK JIM'S BACK JIM'S BACK!
CAN WE DO IT NOW, MUM? CAN WE?
DID YOU FIND WHAT YOU WERE LOOKING FOR DOWN IN THE CAVES, MS. JOCASTA?
I DON'T KNOW.
MAYBE?
KIND OF. SOMETHING HAPPENED, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHAT.
I NEED SOME TIME TO UNPACK IT. I GUESS.
OOH, CRYPTIC!
IT'S NOT CRYPTIC, IT'S ANNOYING!

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IF I'M EVER IN CHARGE OF GIVING A WARNING FROM BEYOND MY GRAVE. I'M GOING TO BE AS CLEAR AS POSSIBLE WITH MY INSTRUCTIONS.
MAYBE OTHER PEOPLE ENJOY THIS POINT-AND-CLICK ADVENTURE PUZZLE CRAP, BUT I NEED A HINT HERE.
MAYBE WE'LL FIND SOMETHING IN THE AVALON TOMORROW?
YEAH. MAYBE.
WHAT'S WRONG?
OH. IT'S NOTHING.
I JUST ALWAYS FEEL LIKE A PET DOG OR SOMETHING WHEN I JUMP UP ON THE FURNITURE.
WHAT A TOPSY-TURVY THOUGHT! A SPHINX AFRAID OF BEING TREATED LIKE A PET DOG!
IT'S LIKE I'M BACK IN WONDERLAND AGAIN.
WHY, YOU'RE PRACTICALLY ROYALTY. MS. JOCASTA.
NO NO, PLEASE DON'T SAY STUFF LIKE THAT.

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I'M HAVING A HARD ENOUGH TIME COMING TO GRIPS WITH MY SITUATION WITHOUT BEING TOLD I M THE CHOSEN ONE, OR WHATEVER.
OH, WE'RE NOT SAYING ANYTHING LIKE THAT, LOVE--
I HAVE STAYED QUIET LONG ENOUGH!!
MY RESTRAINT SHOULD BE COMMENDED, SO CAN WE GET ON WIF THINGS???
I'M DYING HERE!
WHAT'S THAT, COLIN? IS THERE SOMETHING IMPORTANT YOU'D LIKE TO DO TODAY?
NOT TAKING THE BAIT, JIM!
OH, THEN WE CAN KEEP DISCUSSING MICHELLE'S EPIC HERO'S JOURNEY--
YER KILLIN' ME, MATE.
WE'RE NOT CALLING IT THAT!
WELL IF THERE'S NOTHING ELSE TO DO, I GUESS WE SHOULD ALL JUST GO TO BED!
SHUT UP! THUMBS! TIME FOR THUMBS!!

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NOW COLIN, ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT A PROPER PARTY FOR THIS?
I KNOW YOU WANTED TO WAIT FOR JIM TO BE HERE, BUT WE CAN STILL PUT TOGETHER A PARTY FOR YOU.
NAH, WHO WOULD YOU INVITE? I AIN'T GOT NOT FRIENDS MY AGE, SO IT WOULD BE LIKE, YOUR FRIENDS.
I'LL GO FETCH PAUL AND TOBIAS.

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU ACTUALLY WAITED TILL I CAME HOME. I'VE NEVER KNOWN YOU TO WAIT FOR ANYTHING.
I'M A VERY CARING AND EMPATHETIC CREATURE, JIM.

DIDN'T WANT YOU BAWLIN' OVER MISSIN' THE BIG DAY WHEN I GET WEIRD HAIR SO YOU DON'T GOTTA BE ALONE WIF YER CURSE NO MORE.
WHO SAYS YOU GOT THE CURSE?

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SHOULD WE GO? IS THIS SOME SORTA FAMILY THING WE'RE INTRUDING ON?
NAH, THESE THINGS ARE USUALLY MUCH BIGGER AFFAIRS.
I'M SURE WE'LL GET SOME PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE POSTCARDS FROM EXTENDED FAMILY WHEN THEY FIND OUT THEY WEREN'T INVITED.
AND EVEN SO, YOU ARE OUR GUESTS, AND FINGOL IS A PINNACLE OF XENIA. I WILL NOT BE TOLD OTHERWISE
"XENIA?"
IT'S A THING OF MUM'S, JUST GO WITH IT
TOBIAS JAMES FINN, I KNOW I RAISED YOU BETTER THAN TO SASS XENIA.
ALRIGHT LITTLE MATE, YOU'RE NOT GETTING ANY YOUNGER
I WON'T BE "LITTLE" FOR MUCH LONGER!!
WHY YOU MAY EVEN COME UP TO MY KNEE AFTER THIS!
SON, THIS MEDALLION BELONGED TO YOUR GREAT-GREAT AUNT WINNIFRED FINN.
THAT MEANS IT'S WORTH MORE THAN YOU, SO DON'T LOSE IT
THAT'S NOT WHAT IT MEANS!
BOYS.
SHUT UP I'M DOIN' IT!!
WHAP!

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AHH!
THUMBS!
DO I GOT WEIRD HAIR?
I CAN'T TELL!
I NEED A MIRROR!
PUT SOME CLOTHES ON BEFORE YOU CATCH YOUR DEATH OF COLD, YOU FURLESS CREATURE!
WOAH. TWO LEGS IS WEIRD
COLIN!

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SO, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
YOU KNOW AS MUCH AS WE DO, JIMOTHY
CAN'T SAY THIS WAS ENTIRELY UNEXPECTED
Bluehair!! Yeh! YEH!
DOESN'T SEEM TO BOTHER HIM MUCH.
I DIDN'T MIND WHEN I WAS HIS AGE, EITHER
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
YEAH, I THOUGHT YOU LIKED THE CURSE, OR WHATEVER IT'S CALLED.
I DO NOW, BUT IT'S.
This is Amazing!
.. IT'S NOT BEEN THE BEST
PUT THESE ON FOR THE LOVE OF ALL THAT'S-- COLIN!!
GET BACK HERE!
MUM, DO YOU THINK IF I CUT IT IT'LL GROW BACK LIKE JIM'S??
COLIN, DON'T YOU DARE TRY!

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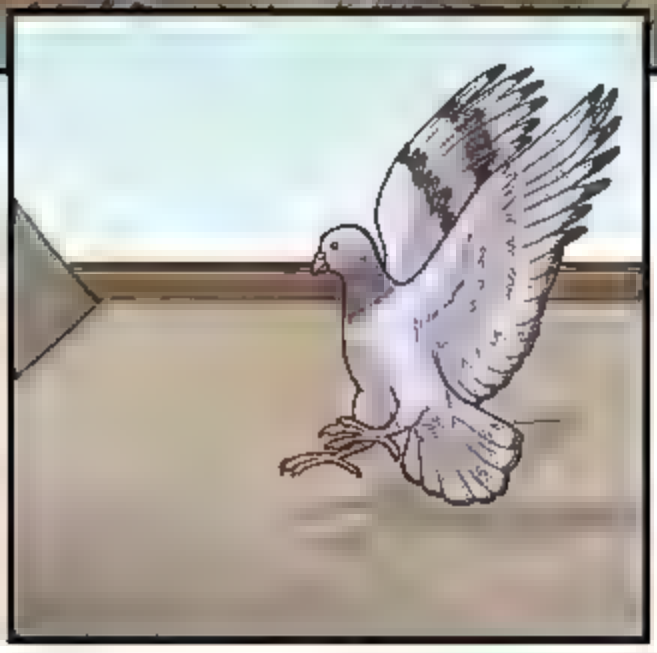

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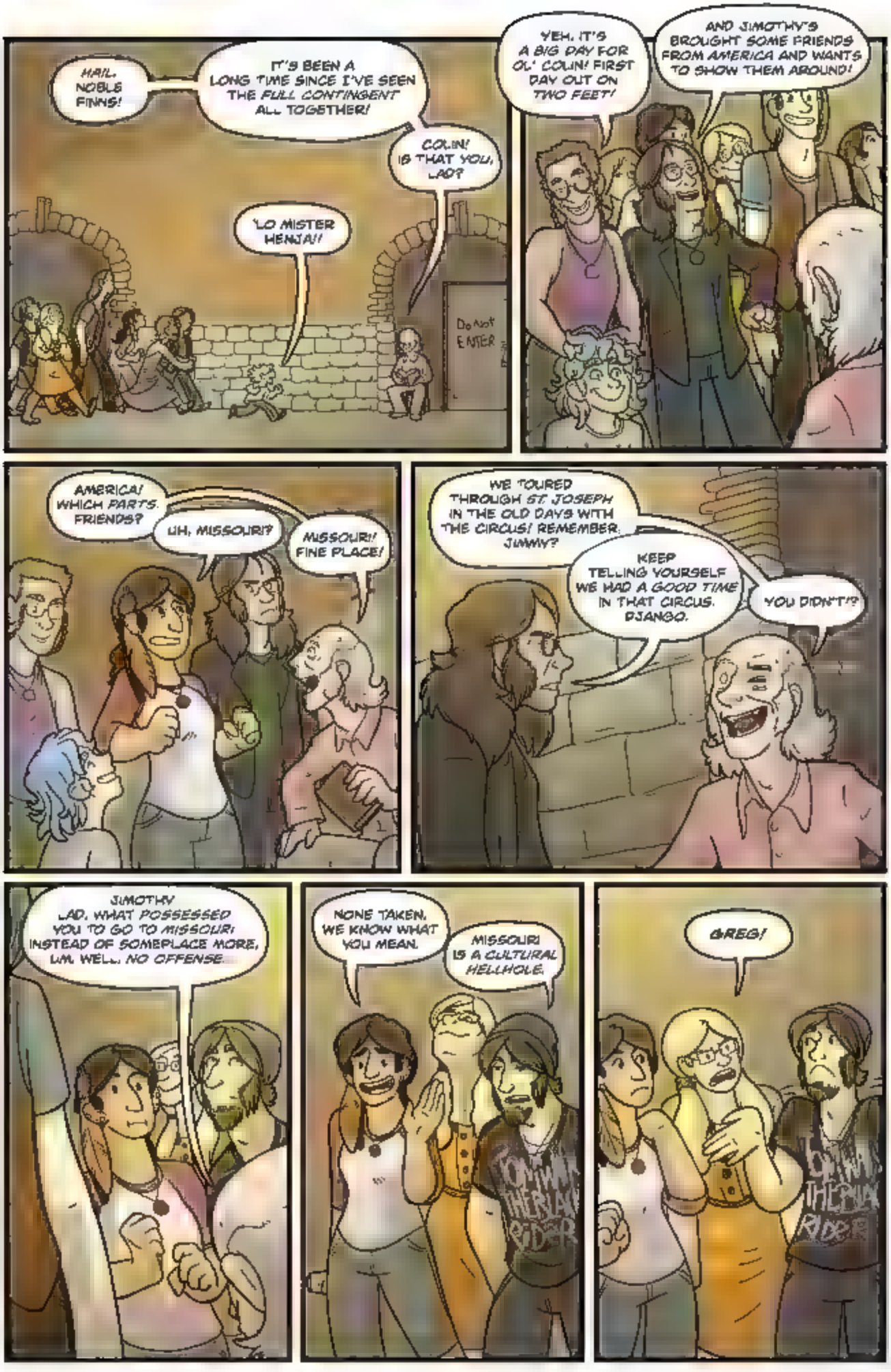
HAIL, NOBLE FINNS!
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE SEEN THE FULL CONTINGENT ALL TOGETHER!
COLIN! IS THAT YOU, LAD?
'LO MISTER HENJA!!
Do Not Enter
YEH. IT'S A BIG DAY FOR OL' COLIN! FIRST DAY OUT ON TWO FEET!
AND JIMOTHY'S BROUGHT SOME FRIENDS FROM AMERICA AND WANTS TO SHOW THEM AROUND!
AMERICA! WHICH PARTS, FRIENDS?
UH, MISSOURI?
MISSOURI! FINE PLACE!
WE TOURED THROUGH ST. JOSEPH IN THE OLD DAYS WITH THE CIRCUS! REMEMBER, JIMMY?
KEEP TELLING YOURSELF WE HAD A GOOD TIME IN THAT CIRCUS, DJANGO.
YOU DIDN'T!?
JIMOTHY LAD, WHAT POSSESSED YOU TO GO TO MISSOURI INSTEAD OF SOMEPLACE MORE, UM, WELL, NO OFFENSE.
NONE TAKEN. WE KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.
MISSOURI IS A CULTURAL HELLHOLE.
GREG!

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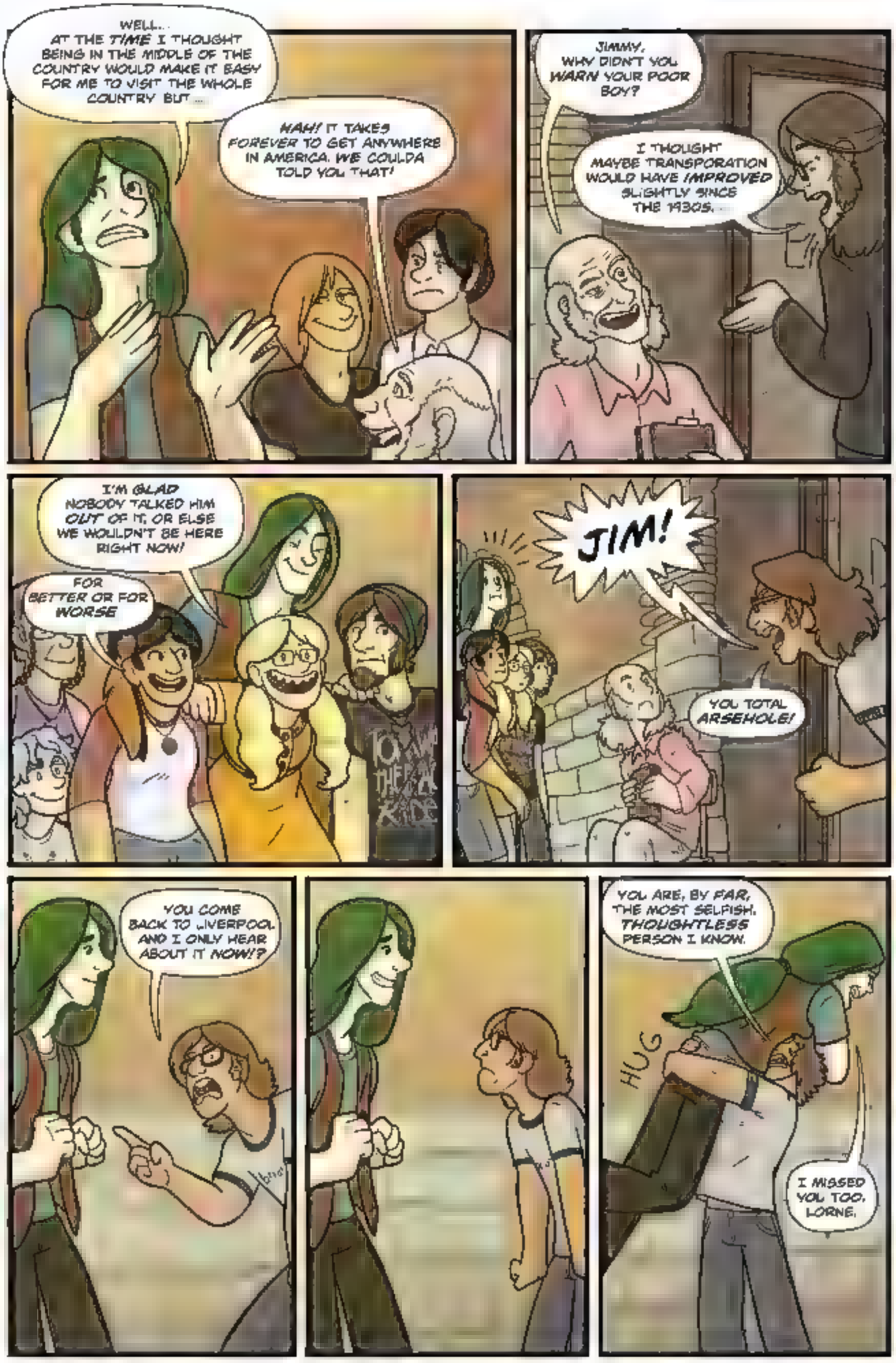
WELL... AT THE TIME I THOUGHT BEING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE COUNTRY WOULD MAKE IT EASY FOR ME TO VISIT THE WHOLE COUNTRY BUT ...
NAH! IT TAKES FOREVER TO GET ANYWHERE IN AMERICA. WE COULDA TOLD YOU THAT!
JIMMY, WHY DIDN'T YOU WARN YOUR POOR BOY?
I THOUGHT MAYBE TRANSPORATION WOULD HAVE IMPROVED SLIGHTLY SINCE THE 1930S. ...
I'M GLAD NOBODY TALKED HIM OUT OF IT, OR ELSE WE WOULDN'T BE HERE RIGHT NOW!
FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE
JIM!
YOU TOTAL ARSEHOLE!
YOU COME BACK TO LIVERPOOL AND I ONLY HEAR ABOUT IT NOW!?
YOU ARE, BY FAR, THE MOST SELFISH, THOUGHTLESS PERSON I KNOW.
HUG
I MISSED YOU TOO, LORNE.

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OH MY GOODNESS, OH MY GOODNESS!
ARE YOU LORNE?
YOU'RE LORNE, RIGHT?
UM.. YES?
JIM. MATE. WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN TELLING YOUR BIG IMPORTANT AMERICAN FRIENDS ABOUT ME?
ONLY SEXY GOSSIP, I PROMISE.
JIM NEVER SHUTS UP ABOUT YOU! I'M SO HAPPY TO MEET YOU!
WELL, AS HAPPY AS THIS ALL IS GOING, I NEED TO ASK YE TO MOVE ON INSIDE.
YOU LOT ARE GONNA START ATTRACTING ATTENTION SOON.
FI-NALLY!
WHAT ATTENTION? AIN'T NOBODY ELSE AROUND.
COLIN JAMES FINN DO NOT RUN OFF TO THAT TOY STORE BY YOURSELF. SOMEONE WILL THINK YOU'RE SOME ESCAPED HUMAN CHILD UNLESS YOU'RE WITH US!
I WON'T!
I WILL

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I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY NON-HUMANS IN ONE PLACE BEFORE!
WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO EVER LEAVE HERE? THIS IS AMAZING!!
GOOD QUESTION, MERIAL!
WHY DID I EVER COME [redacted]CK.
--THERE'S ANOTHER GRYPHON! GREG. LOOK. A SATYR!!
JIM. JIM, JIM!! IS THAT A NIXIE? JIM IS THAT ANOTHER NIXIE??? CAN I GO SAY 'HI' AND BE BEST FRIENDS?
YOU NIXIES ARE A FRIENDLY LOT, BUT HOW ABOUT YOU JUST SUBJECT US TO YOUR HYPERACTIVE EXCITEMENT FOR NOW, YEH?
YOU OKAY, MICHELLE?
RAU'S HOUSE OF

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ARE THERE ANY OTHER RAVIS IN THE LIVERPOOL AVALON?
NOT THAT I KNOW OF. LORNE?
I DUNNO. WHY?
I TOLD YOU ALL ABOUT THE WEIRD STUFF WITH MICHELLE, YEH?
"RAVI" IS A NAME SHE GOT IN A VISION.
brian Lee
RAVI'S A PRETTY COMMON NAME, MEESH. I DOUBT IT'S THIS RAVI.
WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT?
SHOULDN'T WE AT LEAST CHECK IT OUT?
WELL, I'LL WAIT OUT HERE, THEN.
YOU AFRAID OF THIS SHOP OR SOMETHING?
NO, IT'S JUST--
JIM DON'T LIKE RAVI.
WHY?
YOU FOUND HER!
OH MY DARLING JIMOTHY I KNEW YOU WOULD FIND HER! OH THANK THE STARS ABOVE
FROM ACROSS THE SEAS EVEN, OH THEY HID HER DEEP, THEY DID! BUT IF ANYBODY COULD UNEARTH HER, IT WOULD BE ONE OF MY PRECIOUS FINNS!
THIS IS WHY.

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OH MY PRECIOUS DARLINGS, LET US GO INSIDE. I WILL MAKE TEA AND WE CAN TALK!!
IS YOUR FAMILY CLOSE WITH THIS PERSON, JIM?
HE'S LIVED HERE AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, BUT KEEPS TO HIMSELF WHEN HE'S NOT DOING... THIS.
I USUALLY STEER CLEAR BECAUSE OF IT
YOU'VE NEVER ASKED HIM WHY?
I ONLY UNDERSTAND WHAT HE'S SAYING LIKE, A THIRD OF THE TIME.
BHADRAKSH MATE, YOU WORK FOR HIM, WHAT IS HIS DEAL?
YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE, FRIEND.
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW WHY HE TREATED YOU WITH SUCH ENDEARMENT.
ASTOUNDING. JUST ASTOUNDING! AFTER ALL THESE CENTURIES, YOU LOOK JUST LIKE HER!
WHAT IS YOUR NAME, MISS?
MI-MICHELLE JOCASTA?
JOCASTA! YOU STILL CARRY HER NAME! THIS, THIS! HOW REMARKABLE THIS IS!
I HAD ASSUMED THE NAME WOULD HAD BEEN LOST GENERATIONS AGO. BUT YOU ARE STILL A JOCASTA!
OF ALL THE IMPROBABILITIES OF YOUR EXISTENCE. THIS IS POSSIBLY THE MOST IMPROBABLE!
THAAAAAANK YOU?

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NO! IT IS YOU I SHOULD BE THANKING!
THERE ARE UNCERTAIN TIMES AHEAD FOR YOU, MY DARLING! IT IS BRAVE OF YOU TO EMBRACE THEM!
Y'ALL, I'M PRETTY SURE THIS IS THE RAV! WE'RE LOOKING FOR!
YOU'VE HEARD OF ME ALREADY! EXCELLENT!
TELL ME EVERYTHING!
WELL, IT'S KINDA COMPLICATED...
COMPLICATED IS GOOD!
THE, ER... DEAD SHADE OF MY FATHER MENTIONED YOU IN A DREAM?
...ALONG WITH A BUNCH OF OTHER WORDS THAT DIDN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.
DREAMS! GOOD, GOOD!
DREAMS CAN POTENTIALLY HOLD VAST AMOUNTS OF INFORMATION!
LET ME MAKE SOME TEA AND WE CAN TALK!
I AM SURE YOU HAVE QUESTIONS!

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NOW TELL ME, WHY WERE YOU VISITED BY YOUR FATHER'S SHADE INSTEAD OF YOUR SPHINX MOTHER?
MY MOM IS HUMAN. MY DAD WAS THIS, UH, THE SPHINX. I GUESS. BUT HE DIDN'T HAVE WINGS LIKE I DO.
EGYPTIAN SPHINX! THAT IS VERY INTERESTING.
IS THAT BAD?
NOT AT ALL, CHILD! UNUSUAL. BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE!
I AM IN AWE OF HOW TENACIOUSLY YOUR KIND HAS FOUGHT FOR SURVIVAL ALL THESE YEARS.
SO MANY CHANCES TO DIE OUT. BUT YOU HAVE ENDURED!
WHAT LUCK!
SO. ARE THERE... OTHER SPHINXES STILL ALIVE?
I AM NOT AWARE OF ANY OTHERS, I'M AFRAID BUT I KNEW MANY SPHINXES BEFORE THE GREAT WAR!
WHAT!? HOW IS THAT--
I AM A YAKSHA! I HAVE BEEN ALIVE FOR A VERY LONG TIME AND HAVE SEEN MANY THINGS!

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OKAY I'M JUST GONNA THROW OUT SOME WORDS FROM MY DREAM. LET ME KNOW IF THEY MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU.
I LIKE THIS GAME ALREADY!
OKAY...
"WOSRET"
WOSRET!
OH. THE "POWERFUL ONE" HE WAS! HE AND JOCASTA WERE GREAT FRIENDS. THEY DEVISED THEIR PLAN TOGETHER. THE PLAN THAT LED TO YOU.
THEY FOOLED EVERYONE INTO THINKING SPHINXES WERE GONE FOREVER!
SO HE WAS A SPHINX TOO?
THE LAST BEFORE THE HIDING! HE WAS AN EGYPTIAN SPHINX. LIKE YOUR FATHER'S SHADE
JOCASTA AND WOSRET
THEY KNEW THEIR BEST CHANCE OF SURVIVAL WOULD BE TO SPLIT UP.
WOSRET PLANNED TO RETURN TO EGYPT AFTER THE GREAT WAR, JOCASTA TO GREECE.
ALTHOUGH CONSIDERING HOW FAR JOCASTA'S HEIRS TRAVELED, IT IS ANYBODY'S GUESS WHERE WOSRET'S ARE NOW.
OR IF THEY SURVIVED AT ALL.

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SO A PAIR OF SPHINXES ESCAPED THE GREAT WAR?
WE WERE ALWAYS TOLD THAT THEY ALL DIED.
THAT'S PRECISELY WHAT THEY WANTED EVERYONE TO THINK!
BUT WHY?
WELL, THEY CERTAINLY DIDN'T WANT TO ACTUALLY GO EXTINCT! AND IF THEY HADN'T TRIED TO FOOL THE DRAGONS, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED!
BUT DRAGONS ALSO WENT EXTI--
OH.
OH?
I WAS CAPTURED BY A DRAGON SHORTLY AFTER I TURNED, BUT HE LET ME GO.
HMM!
SO, WAIT, THE WAY I WAS TAUGHT HOW THIS WORKS, SHOULDN'T THERE BE, LIKE, A WHOLE BUNCH OF UNTURNED SPHINXES OUT THERE?
ANYONE RELATED TO JOCASTA WOULD BE A SPHINX, RIGHT? EVERYONE ON MICHELLE'S FATHER'S SIDE OF THE FAMILY?
I DON'T HAVE ANY FAMILY ON MY FATHER'S SIDE.
HMM!

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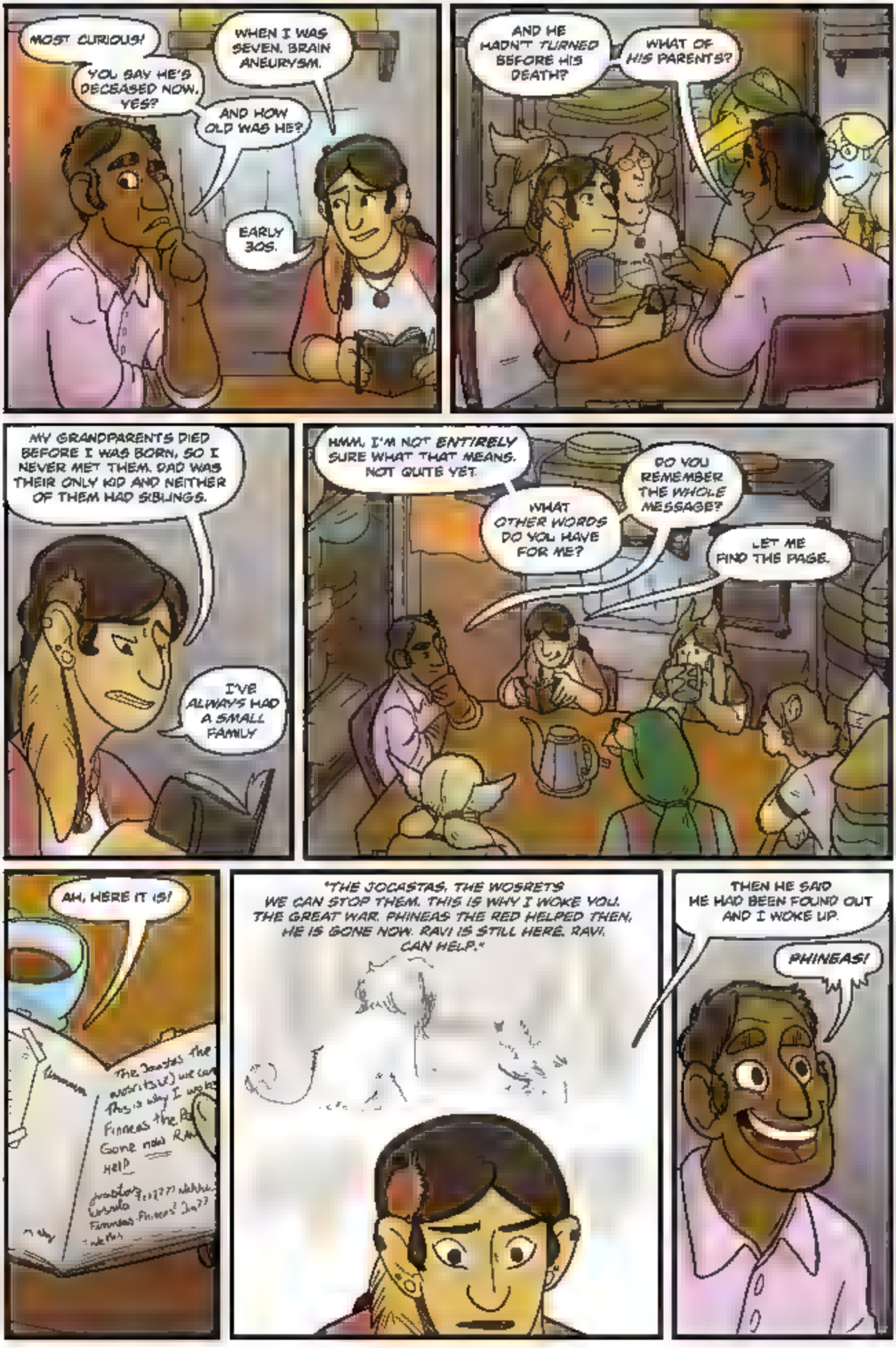
MOST CURIOUS!
YOU SAY HE'S DECEASED NOW, YES?
WHEN I WAS SEVEN. BRAIN ANEURYSM.
AND HOW OLD WAS HE?
EARLY 30S.
AND HE HADN'T TURNED BEFORE HIS DEATH?
WHAT OF HIS PARENTS?
MY GRANDPARENTS DIED BEFORE I WAS BORN, SO I NEVER MET THEM. DAD WAS THEIR ONLY KID AND NEITHER OF THEM HAD SIBLINGS.
I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SMALL FAMILY
HMM, I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE WHAT THAT MEANS. NOT QUITE YET.
WHAT OTHER WORDS DO YOU HAVE FOR ME?
DO YOU REMEMBER THE WHOLE MESSAGE?
LET ME FIND THE PAGE.
AH, HERE IT IS!
"THE JOCASTAS, THE WOSRETS WE CAN STOP THEM. THIS IS WHY I WOKE YOU. THE GREAT WAR. PHINEAS THE RED HELPED THEN. HE IS GONE NOW. RAVI IS STILL HERE. RAVI CAN HELP."
THEN HE SAID HE HAD BEEN FOUND OUT AND I WOKE UP.
PHINEAS!

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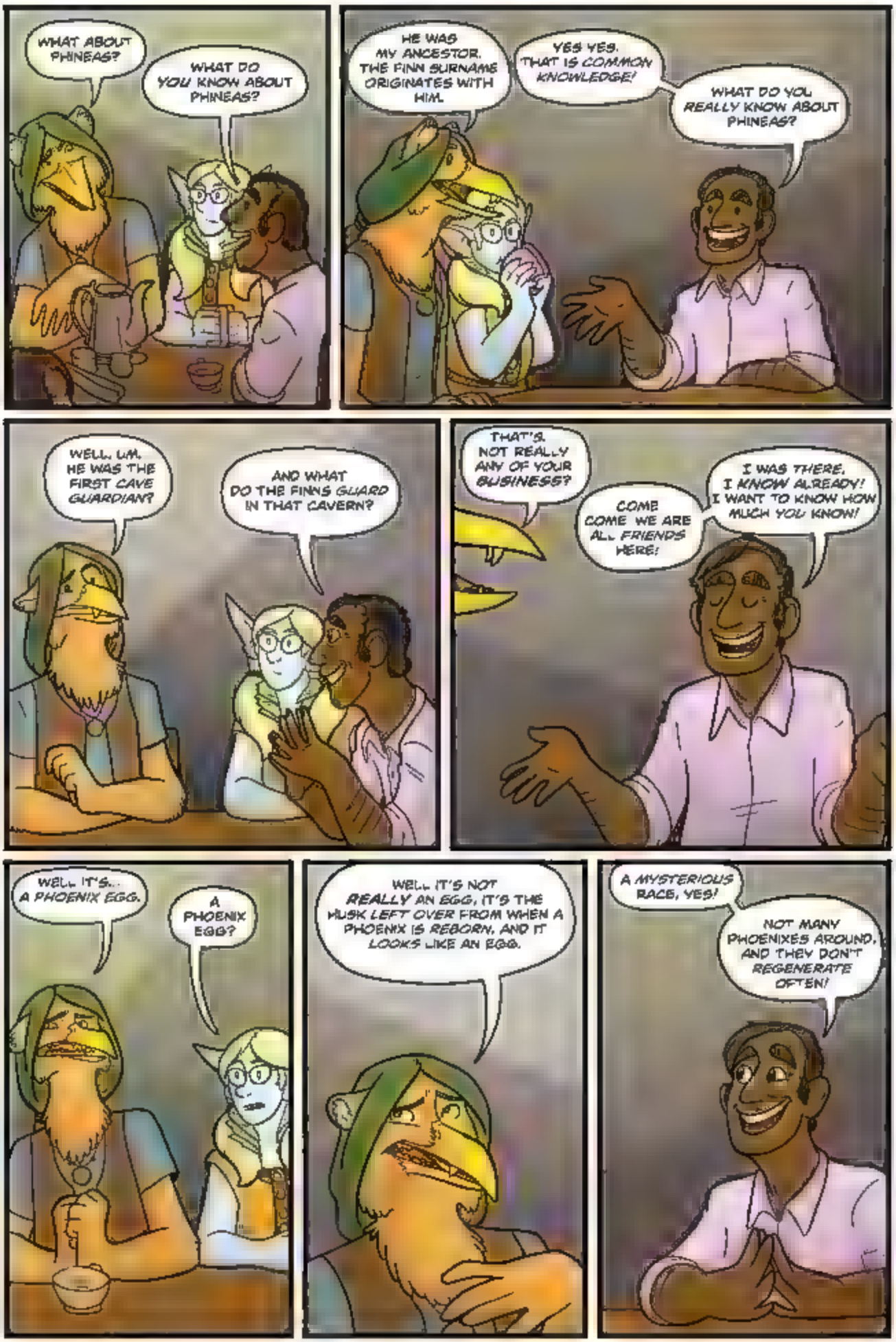
WHAT ABOUT PHINEAS?
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PHINEAS?
HE WAS MY ANCESTOR. THE FINN SURNAME ORIGINATES WITH HIM.
YES YES. THAT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE!
WHAT DO YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT PHINEAS?
WELL, UM. HE WAS THE FIRST CAVE GUARDIAN?
AND WHAT DO THE FINNS GUARD IN THAT CAVERN?
THAT'S NOT REALLY ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS?
COME COME WE ARE ALL FRIENDS HERE!
I WAS THERE. I KNOW ALREADY! I WANT TO KNOW HOW MUCH YOU KNOW!
WELL IT'S.. A PHOENIX EGG.
A PHOENIX EGG?
WELL IT'S NOT REALLY AN EGG, IT'S THE HUSK LEFT OVER FROM WHEN A PHOENIX IS REBORN, AND IT LOOKS LIKE AN EGG.
A MYSTERIOUS RACE, YES!
NOT MANY PHOENIXES AROUND, AND THEY DON'T REGENERATE OFTEN!

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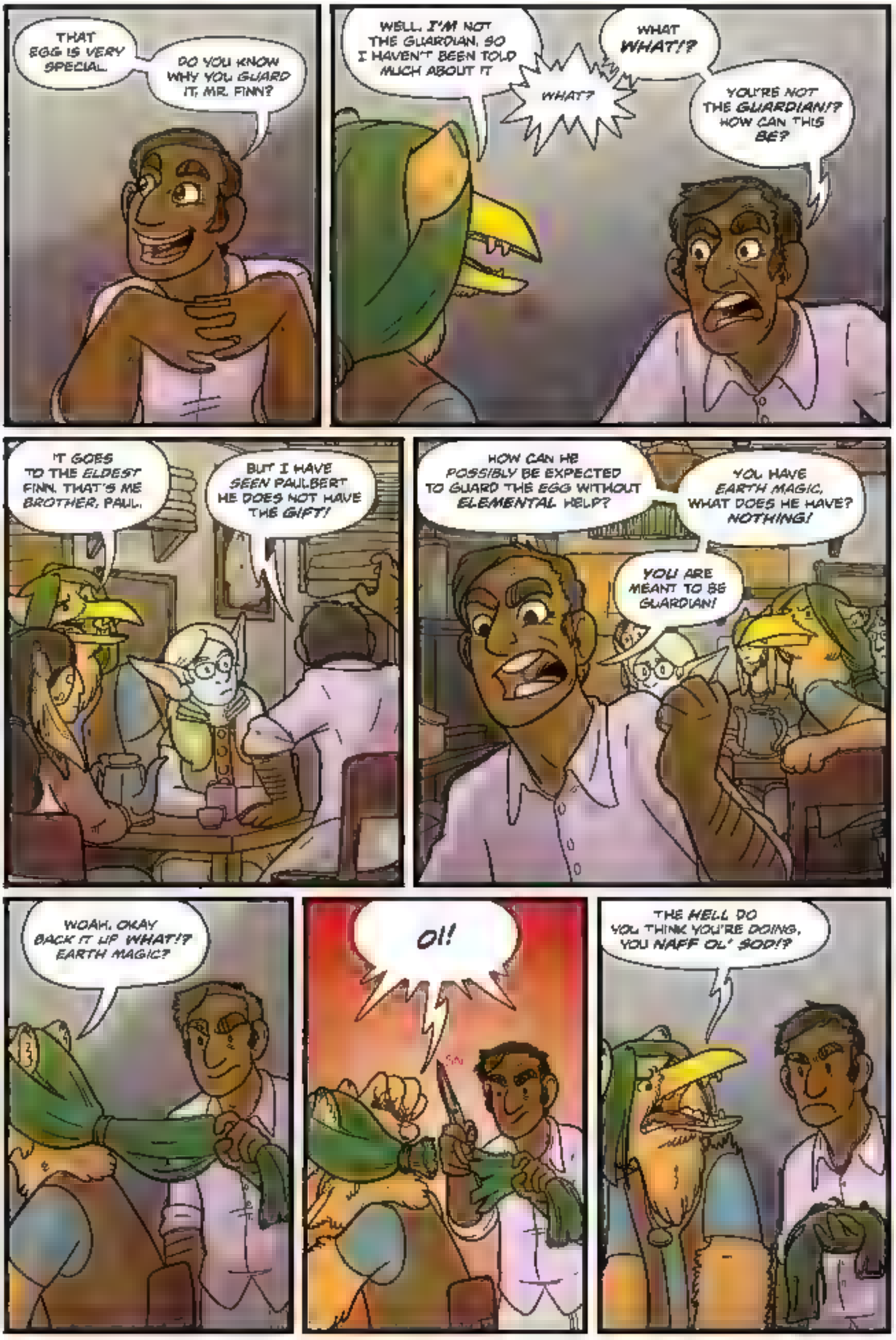
THAT EGG IS VERY SPECIAL.
DO YOU KNOW WHY YOU GUARD IT, MR. FINN?
WELL, I'M NOT THE GUARDIAN, SO I HAVEN'T BEEN TOLD MUCH ABOUT IT
WHAT?
WHAT WHAT!?
YOU'RE NOT THE GUARDIAN!? HOW CAN THIS BE?
IT GOES TO THE ELDEST FINN. THAT'S ME BROTHER, PAUL.
BUT I HAVE SEEN PAULBERT HE DOES NOT HAVE THE GIFT!
HOW CAN HE POSSIBLY BE EXPECTED TO GUARD THE EGG WITHOUT ELEMENTAL HELP?
YOU HAVE EARTH MAGIC, WHAT DOES HE HAVE? NOTHING!
YOU ARE MEANT TO BE GUARDIAN!
WOAH, OKAY BACK IT UP WHAT!? EARTH MAGIC?
OI!
THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, YOU NAFF OL' SOD!?

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WASTED!
GOOD MAGIC, WASTED!
HOW IS IT YOU HAVE SQUANDERED YOUR GIFT SO THOROUGHLY?
WHAT BLEEDIN' GIFT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THIS!
AND I ASSUME YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE THE MOST RUDIMENTARY CONTROL OVER THESE?
AM I SUPPOSED TO?
MAKE SENSE!!
A WASTE!
WHAT A WASTE!
I KNEW I HAD BEEN GONE FOR A LONG TIME BUT I NEVER DREAMED THAT MY GIFTS WOULD BE WASTED IN SUCH A FASHION!

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WOW. THIS SORT OF THING REALLY FEELS DIFFERENT WHEN I'M NOT ON THE RECEIVING END OF IT.
UH, MAYBE WE SHOULD START OVER AT THE BEGINNING, MR. RAVI.
JIM TOLD US HIS APPEARANCE WAS THE RESULT OF AN OLD FORGOTTEN CURSE ON HIS FAMILY. IS THAT NOT TRUE?
CURSE!?
CURSE!?
YOU CALL IT A CURSE!?
WELL WE SURE AS HELL DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO CALL IT!
NOBODY'S HAD IT FOR GENERATIONS!
NOT FOR GENERATIONS?
HOW COULD THIS BE?
I COULD NEVER HAVE ANTICIPATED MY INFLUENCE WOULD BE CUT OFF WHEN I RETURNED TO INDIA. YET WHAT ELSE COULD IT HAVE BEEN?
IT IS A MIRACLE THE EGG IS STILL INTACT!
WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE FINNS?
WHAT IS SO IMPORTANT ABOUT THE PHOENIX EGG?
WHY.
I WAS PHINEAS' DEAREST FRIEND!
What.

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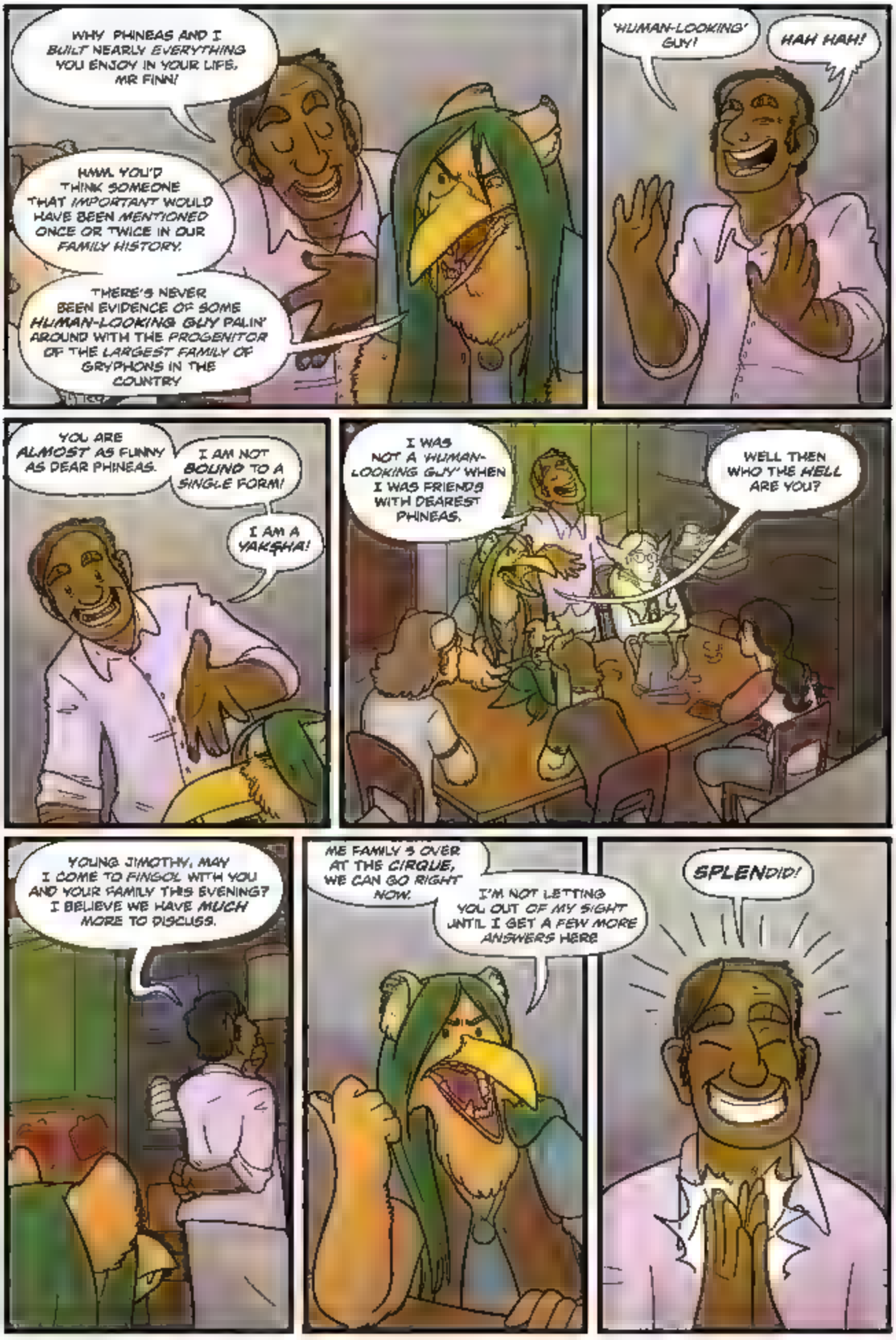
WHY PHINEAS AND I BUILT NEARLY EVERYTHING YOU ENJOY IN YOUR LIFE, MR FINN!
HMM. YOU'D THINK SOMEONE THAT IMPORTANT WOULD HAVE BEEN MENTIONED ONCE OR TWICE IN OUR FAMILY HISTORY.
THERE'S NEVER BEEN EVIDENCE OF SOME HUMAN-LOOKING GUY PALIN' AROUND WITH THE PROGENITOR OF THE LARGEST FAMILY OF GRYPHONS IN THE COUNTRY
'HUMAN-LOOKING' GUY!
HAH HAH!
YOU ARE ALMOST AS FUNNY AS DEAR PHINEAS.
I AM NOT BOUND TO A SINGLE FORM!
I AM A YAKSHA!
I WAS NOT A 'HUMAN-LOOKING GUY' WHEN I WAS FRIENDS WITH DEAREST PHINEAS.
WELL THEN WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
YOUNG JIMOTHY, MAY I COME TO FINSOL WITH YOU AND YOUR FAMILY THIS EVENING? I BELIEVE WE HAVE MUCH MORE TO DISCUSS.
ME FAMILY'S OVER AT THE CIRQUE, WE CAN GO RIGHT NOW.
I'M NOT LETTING YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT UNTIL I GET A FEW MORE ANSWERS HERE
SPLENDID!

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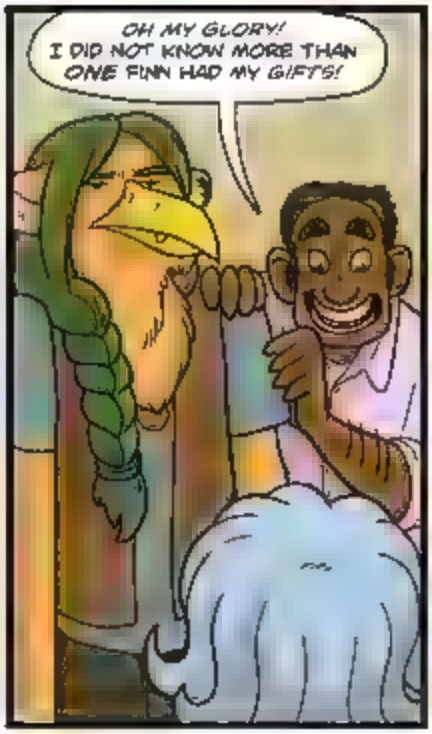

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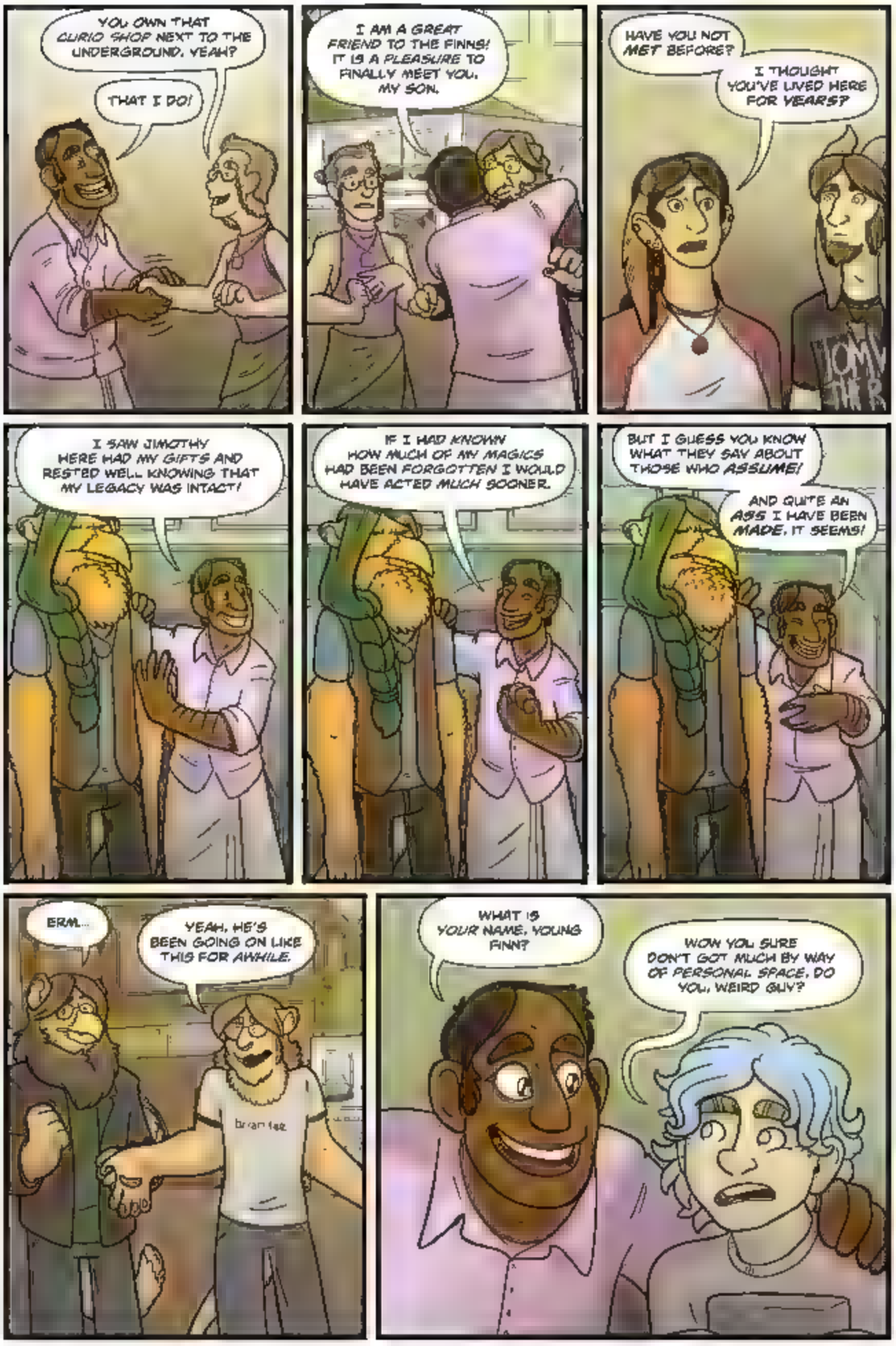
YOU OWN THAT CURIO SHOP NEXT TO THE UNDERGROUND, YEAH?
THAT I DO!
I AM A GREAT FRIEND TO THE FINNS! IT IS A PLEASURE TO FINALLY MEET YOU, MY SON.
HAVE YOU NOT MET BEFORE?
I THOUGHT YOU'VE LIVED HERE FOR YEARS?
I SAW JIMOTHY HERE HAD MY GIFTS AND RESTED WELL KNOWING THAT MY LEGACY WAS INTACT!
IF I HAD KNOWN HOW MUCH OF MY MAGICS HAD BEEN FORGOTTEN I WOULD HAVE ACTED MUCH SOONER.
BUT I GUESS YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THOSE WHO ASSUME!
AND QUITE AN ASS I HAVE BEEN MADE, IT SEEMS!
ERM...
YEAH, HE'S BEEN GOING ON LIKE THIS FOR AWHILE.
WHAT IS YOUR NAME, YOUNG FINN?
WOW YOU SURE DON'T GOT MUCH BY WAY OF PERSONAL SPACE, DO YOU, WEIRD GUY?

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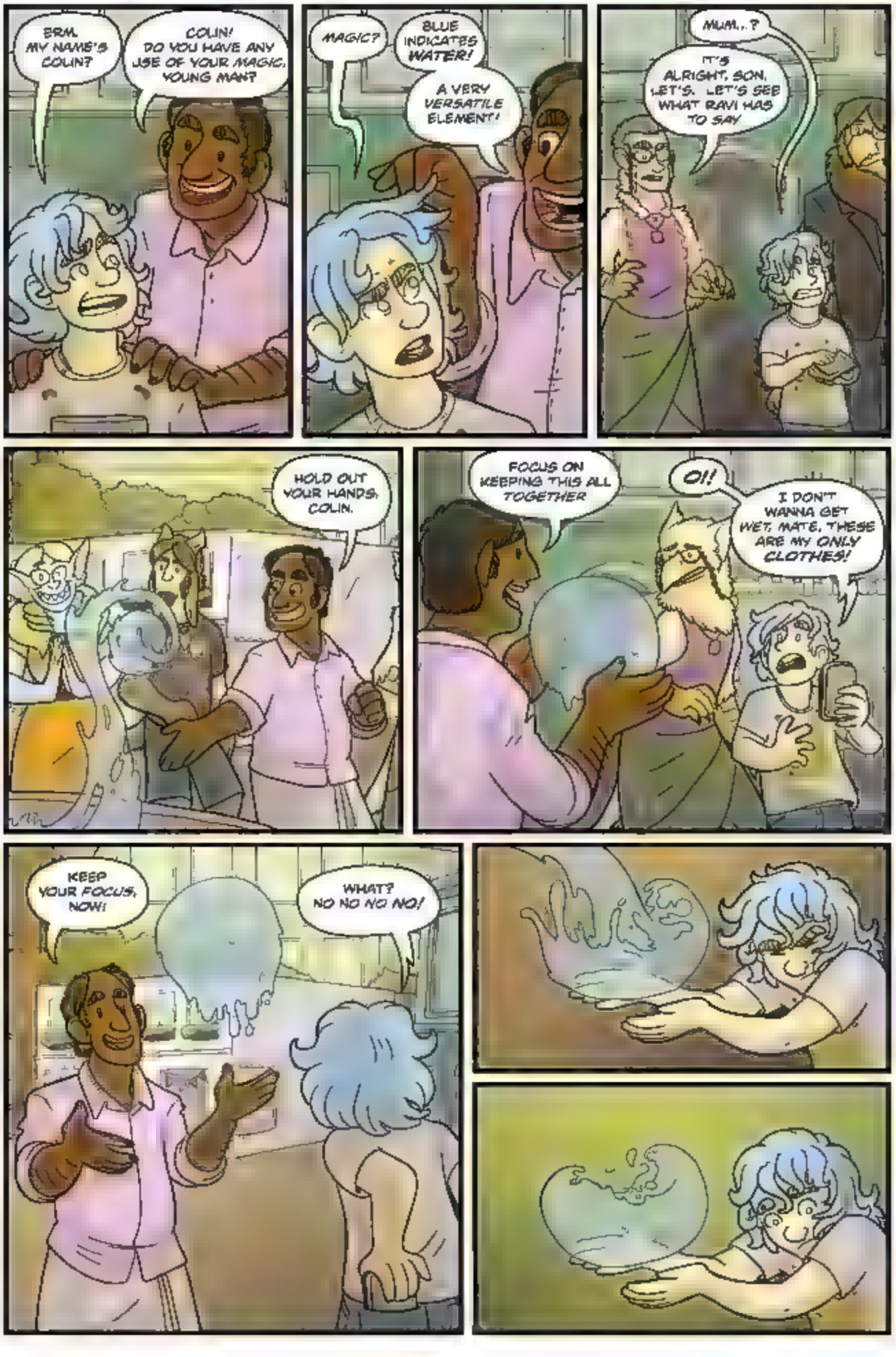
ERM. MY NAME'S COLIN?
COLIN! DO YOU HAVE ANY USE OF YOUR MAGIC, YOUNG MAN?
MAGIC?
BLUE INDICATES WATER!
A VERY VERSATILE ELEMENT!
MUM..?
IT'S ALRIGHT, SON. LET'S. LET'S SEE WHAT RAVI HAS TO SAY
HOLD OUT YOUR HANDS, COLIN.
FOCUS ON KEEPING THIS ALL TOGETHER
OI!
I DON'T WANNA GET WET, MATE. THESE ARE MY ONLY CLOTHES!
KEEP YOUR FOCUS, NOW!
WHAT? NO NO NO NO!

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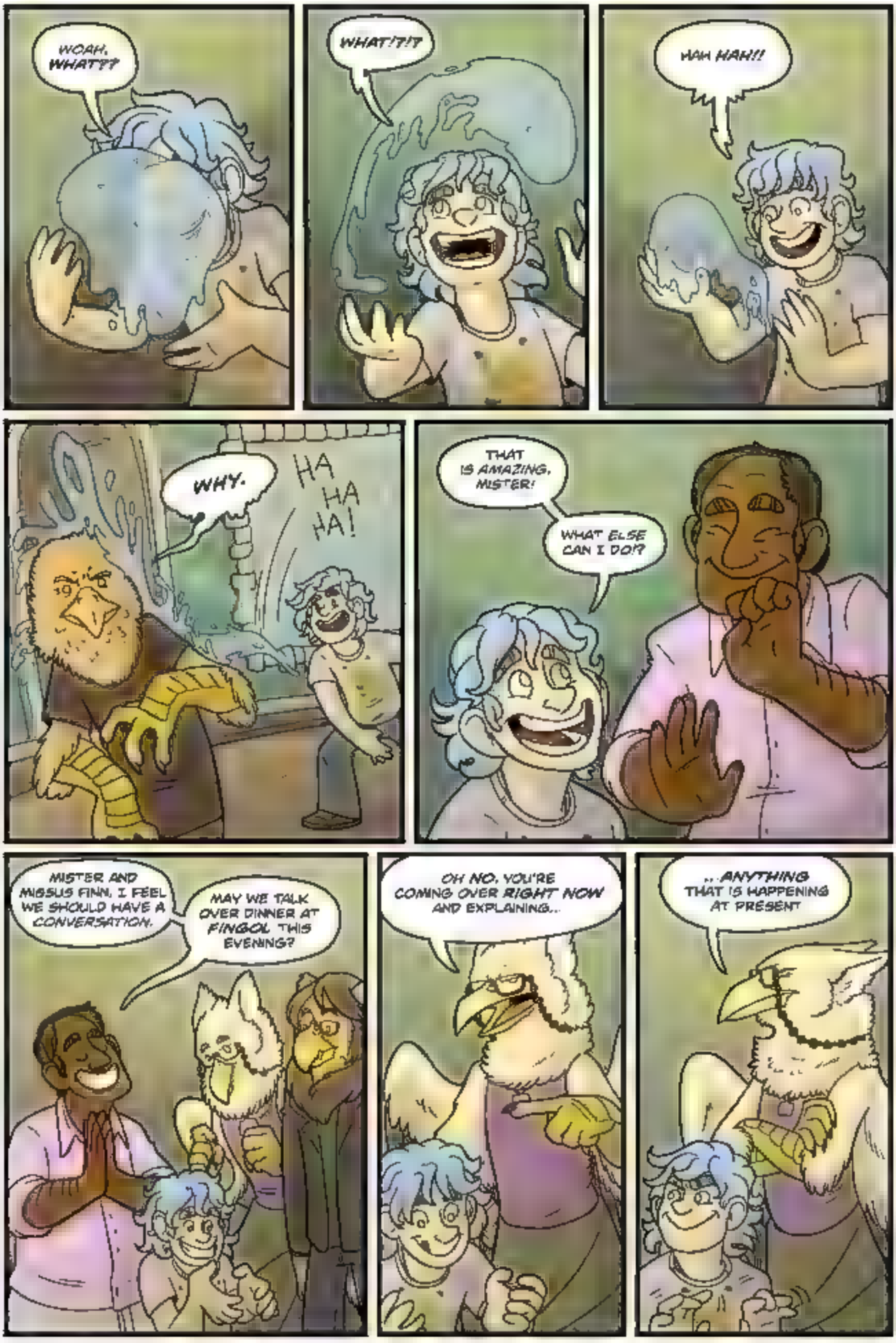
WOAH. WHAT??
WHAT!?!?
HAH HAH!!
WHY.
HA HA HA!
THAT IS AMAZING, MISTER!
WHAT ELSE CAN I DO!?
MISTER AND MISSUS FINN, I FEEL WE SHOULD HAVE A CONVERSATION.
MAY WE TALK OVER DINNER AT FINGOL THIS EVENING?
OH NO, YOU'RE COMING OVER RIGHT NOW AND EXPLAINING...
...ANYTHING THAT IS HAPPENING AT PRESENT

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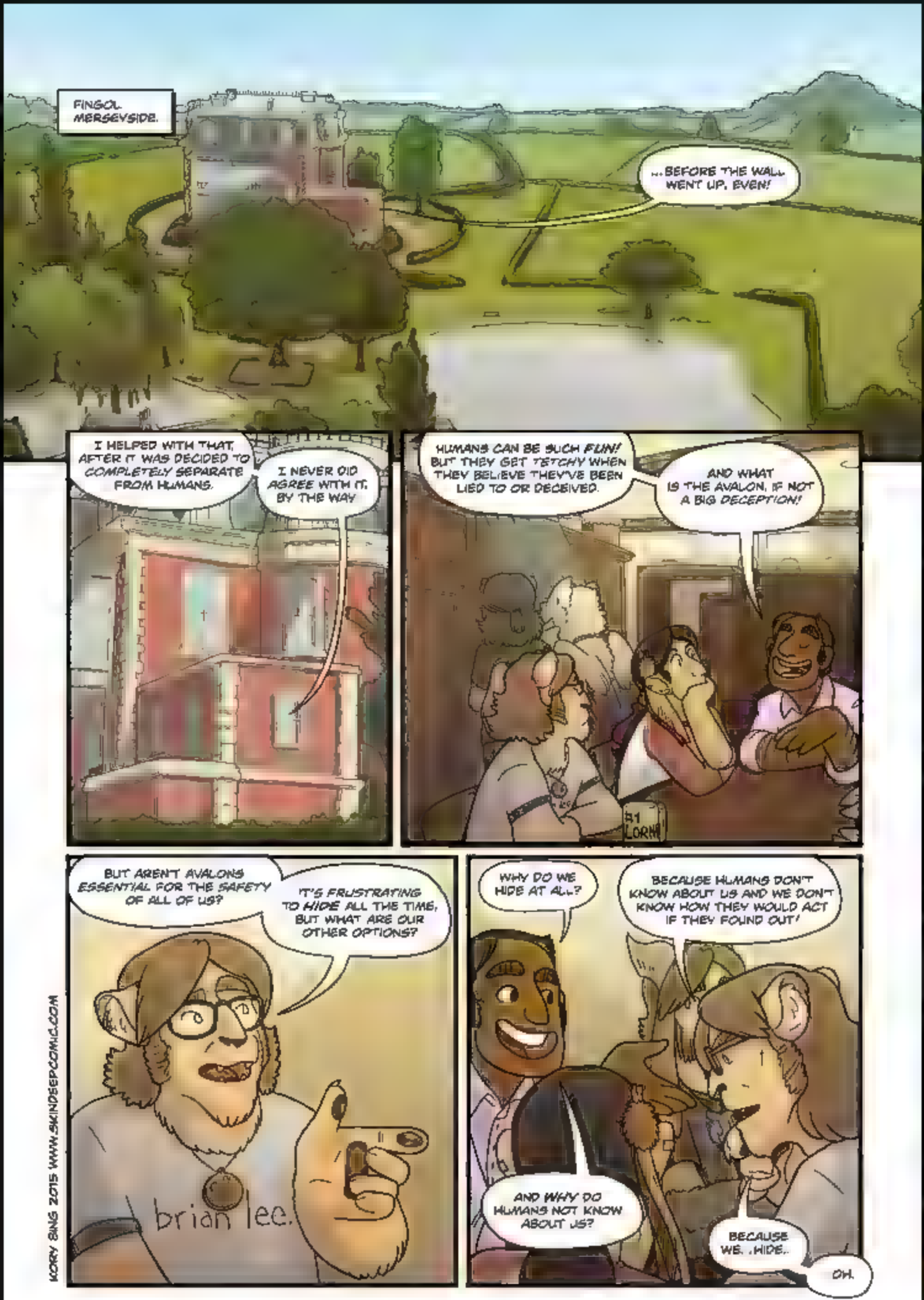
FINGOL
MERSEYSIDE.
...BEFORE THE WALL WENT UP, EVEN!
I HELPED WITH THAT, AFTER IT WAS DECIDED TO COMPLETELY SEPARATE FROM HUMANS.
I NEVER DID AGREE WITH IT, BY THE WAY.
HUMANS CAN BE SUCH FUN! BUT THEY GET TETCHY WHEN THEY BELIEVE THEY'VE BEEN LIED TO OR DECEIVED.
AND WHAT IS THE AVALON, IF NOT A BIG DECEPTION!
#1 LORNA
BUT AREN'T AVALONS ESSENTIAL FOR THE SAFETY OF ALL OF US?
IT'S FRUSTRATING TO HIDE ALL THE TIME, BUT WHAT ARE OUR OTHER OPTIONS?
brian lee.
WHY DO WE HIDE AT ALL?
BECAUSE HUMANS DON'T KNOW ABOUT US AND WE DON'T KNOW HOW THEY WOULD ACT IF THEY FOUND OUT!
AND WHY DO HUMANS NOT KNOW ABOUT US?
BECAUSE WE...HIDE.
OH.

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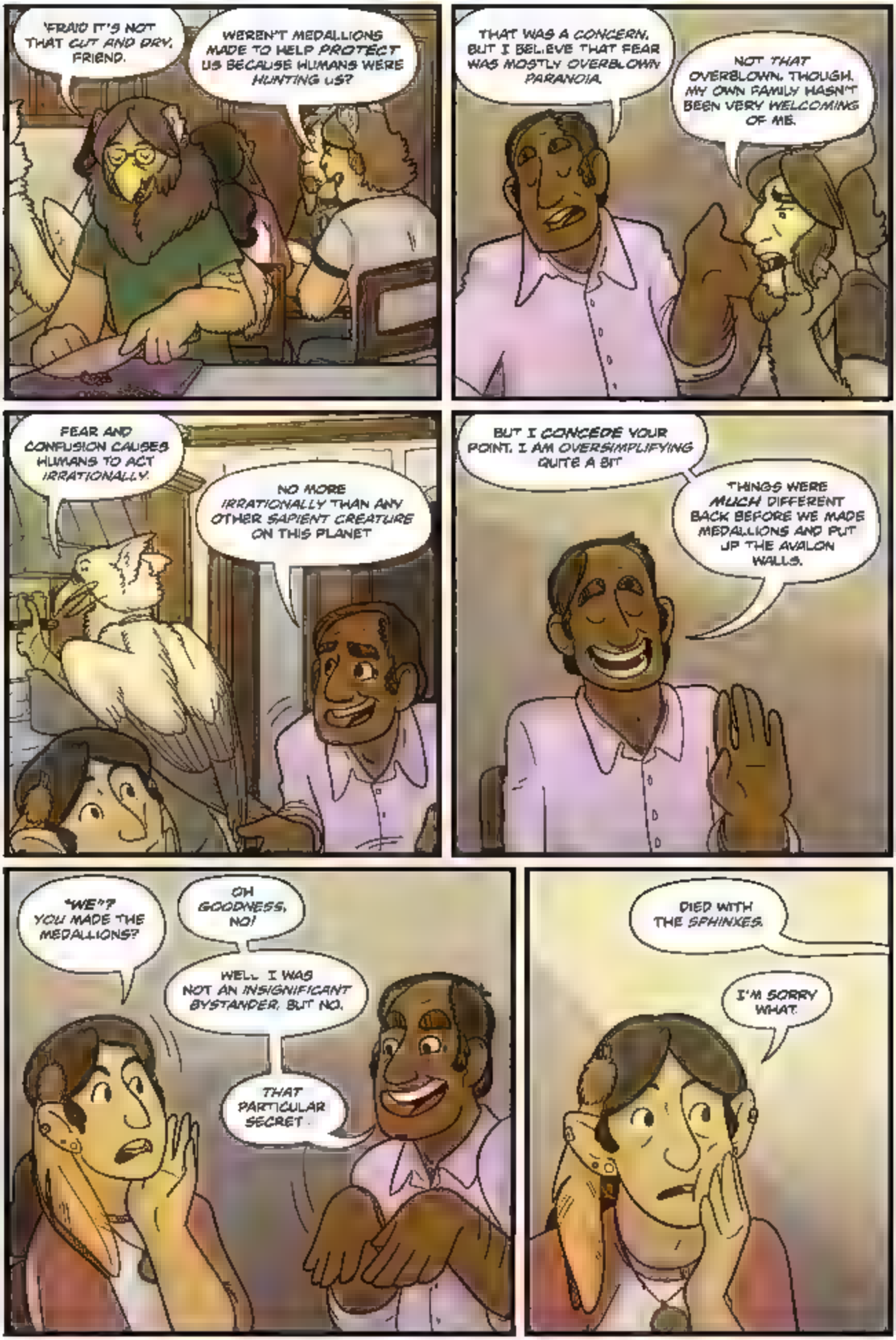
'FRAID IT'S NOT THAT CUT AND DRY, FRIEND.
WEREN'T MEDALLIONS MADE TO HELP PROTECT US BECAUSE HUMANS WERE HUNTING US?
THAT WAS A CONCERN, BUT I BELIEVE THAT FEAR WAS MOSTLY OVERBLOWN PARANOIA.
NOT THAT OVERBLOWN, THOUGH. MY OWN FAMILY HASN'T BEEN VERY WELCOMING OF ME.
FEAR AND CONFUSION CAUSES HUMANS TO ACT IRRATIONALLY.
NO MORE IRRATIONALLY THAN ANY OTHER SAPIENT CREATURE ON THIS PLANET
BUT I CONCEDE YOUR POINT. I AM OVERSIMPLIFYING QUITE A BIT
THINGS WERE MUCH DIFFERENT BACK BEFORE WE MADE MEDALLIONS AND PUT UP THE AVALON WALLS.
"WE"? YOU MADE THE MEDALLIONS?
OH GOODNESS, NO!
WELL, I WAS NOT AN INSIGNIFICANT BYSTANDER, BUT NO.
THAT PARTICULAR SECRET
DIED WITH THE SPHINXES.
I'M SORRY WHAT.

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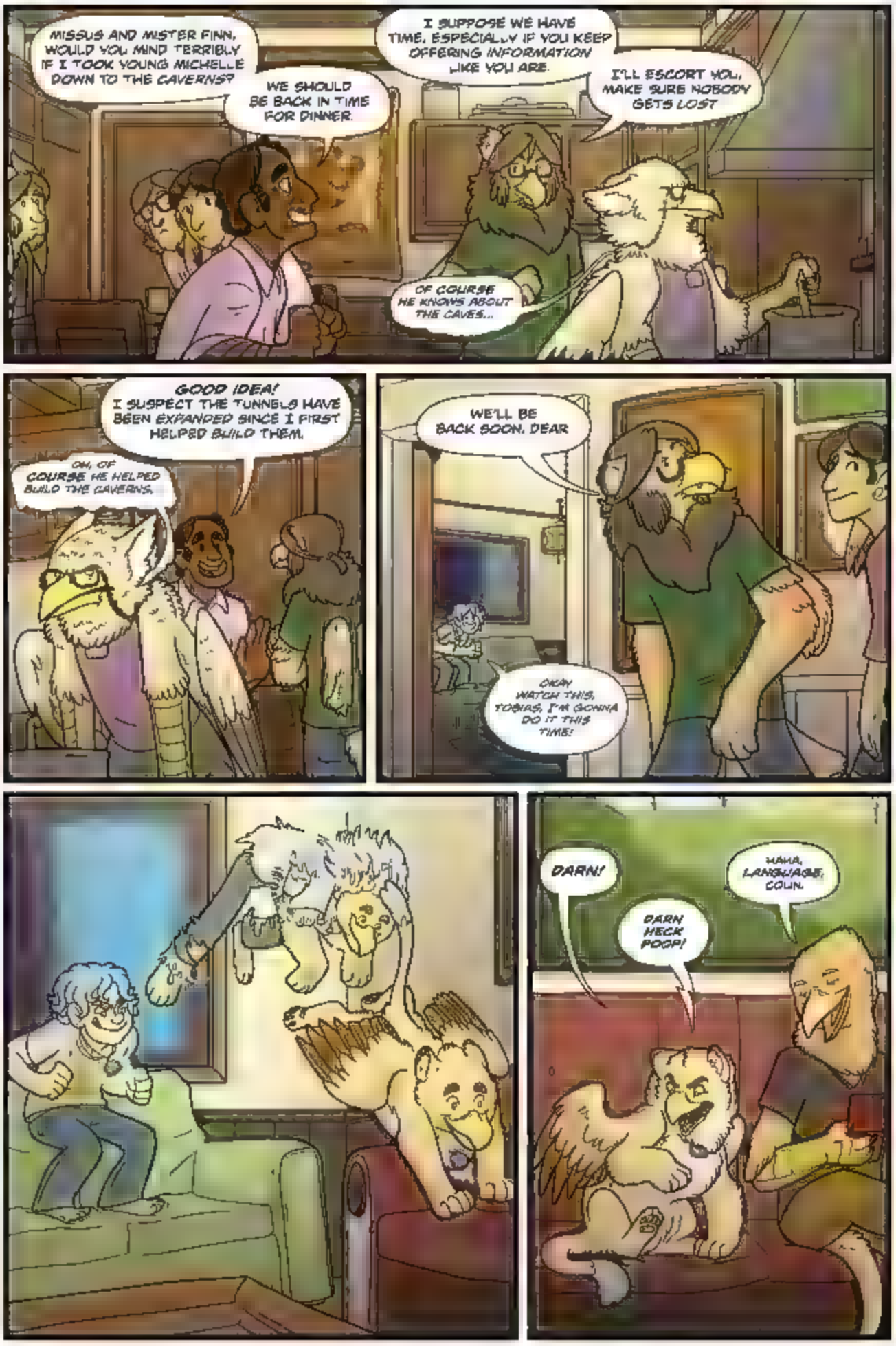
MISSUS AND MISTER FINN, WOULD YOU MIND TERRIBLY IF I TOOK YOUNG MICHELLE DOWN TO THE CAVERNS?
WE SHOULD BE BACK IN TIME FOR DINNER.
I SUPPOSE WE HAVE TIME, ESPECIALLY IF YOU KEEP OFFERING INFORMATION LIKE YOU ARE.
I'LL ESCORT YOU, MAKE SURE NOBODY GETS LOST
OF COURSE HE KNOWS ABOUT THE CAVES...
GOOD IDEA! I SUSPECT THE TUNNELS HAVE BEEN EXPANDED SINCE I FIRST HELPED BUILD THEM.
OH, OF COURSE HE HELPED BUILD THE CAVERNS.
WE'LL BE BACK SOON, DEAR
OKAY WATCH THIS, TOBIAS, I'M GONNA DO IT THIS TIME!
DARN!
DARN HECK POOP!
MAMA, LANGUAGE, COLIN.

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UGH!
I CAN ONLY DO ONE OR THE OTHER. WHY CAN'T I GRAB A MIDFORM?
YOU GOT THAT THING YESTERDAY, MATE.
IT'S A MIRACLE YOU'VE FIGURED OUT HOW TO KEEP YER CLOTHES ON.
CLOTHES ARE RUBBISH!!
WHOSE IDEA WAS IT TO WEAR THEM?
WHATEVER TOBIAS IS TELLING YOU IS LIES, COLIN.
I WASN'T TELLIN' HIM NOFIN!
WHY ARE YOU ALL SO MEAN TO ME?
IT'S BECAUSE I'M NOT A MANED GRYPHON, ISN'T IT?
THE WHOLE FAMILY HAS ALWAYS HELD THAT AGAINST ME!
WE TEASE YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE SO MUCH FUN TO TEASE, AND YOU KNOW IT, TOBIAS.
ARE WE MAKING FUN OF TOBY IN HERE?
YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO JOIN IN, YER NOT MY BROTHER
AWW. TOBY, IS THAT ANY WAY TO SPEAK TO A DEAR FAMILY FRIEND YOU'VE KNOWN ALL YOUR LIFE?
WHY I REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE BUT A WEE EGG.
THIS IS PRECIOUS.

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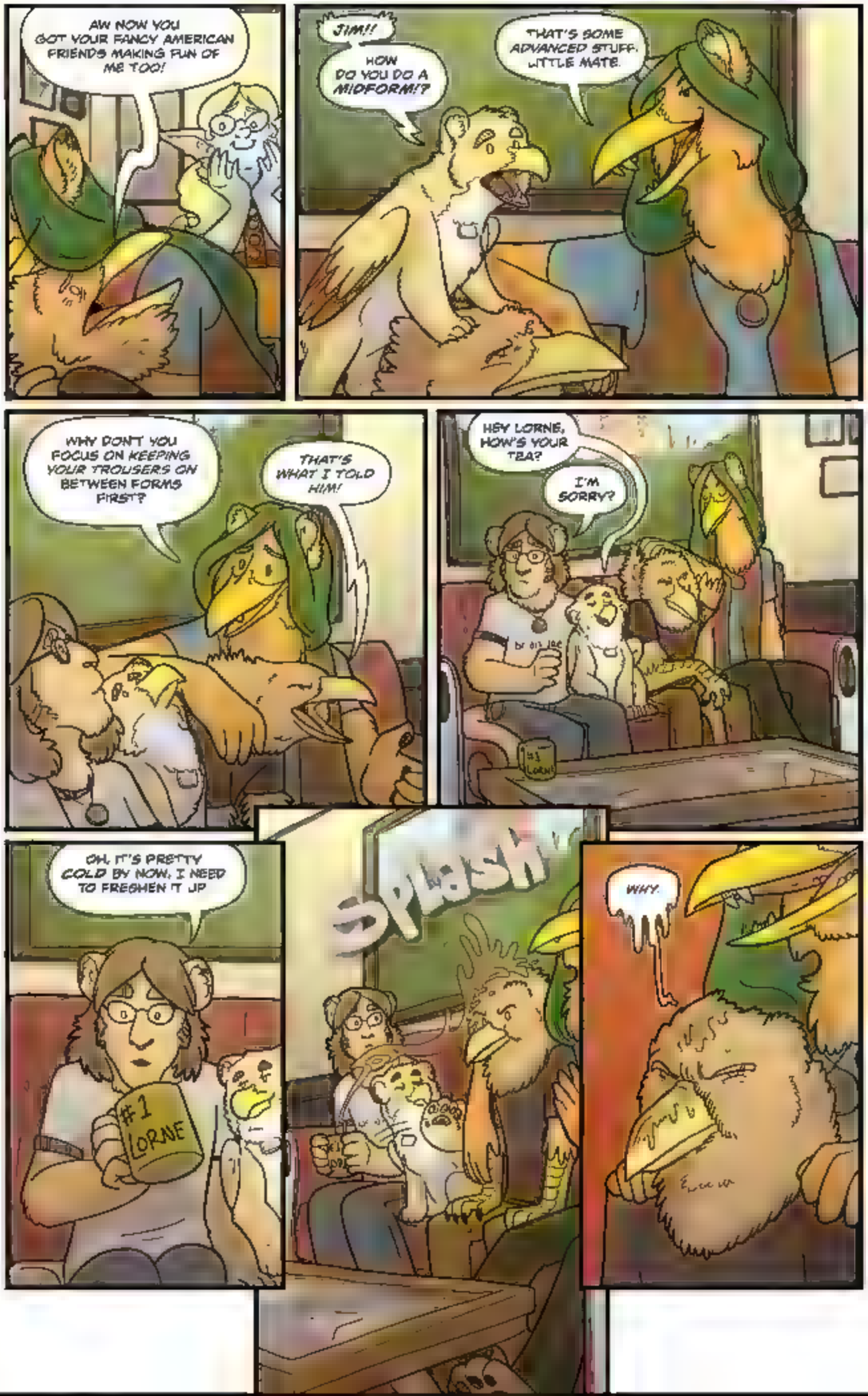
AW NOW YOU GOT YOUR FANCY AMERICAN FRIENDS MAKING FUN OF ME TOO!
JIM!!
HOW DO YOU DO A MIDFORM!?
THAT'S SOME ADVANCED STUFF, LITTLE MATE.
WHY DON'T YOU FOCUS ON KEEPING YOUR TROUSERS ON BETWEEN FORMS FIRST?
THAT'S WHAT I TOLD HIM!
HEY LORNE, HOW'S YOUR TEA?
I'M SORRY?
#1 LORNE
OH, IT'S PRETTY COLD BY NOW, I NEED TO FRESHEN IT UP
#1 LORNE
SPLASH
WHY.

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I CAN SEE WHEN I'M NOT WANTED!
Stomp Stomp Stomp
COLIN. THAT WEREN'T VERY NICE.
I BLAME ALL OF YOU FOR BEING BAD INFLUENCES ON MY TENDER YOUNG DEVELOPIN' BRAIN.
HOW DO YOU DO THAT WATER THING, MATE?
I CAN'T GROK IT AT ALL.
I DUNNO. MAYBE YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT IT TOO HARD?
YOU JUST KINDA.
DO IT.
SO NOT ONLY DID YOU GET MY STUPID TERRIBLE DISFIGUREMENTS BUT YOU GOT THEM BETTER THAN I DID.
YOU'RE NOT DISFIGURED!!
WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT ABOUT YOURSELF!?

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AND SO,
#1 URSE
KORY BINS 2016 WWW.SKINDEEP.COMICS.COM
DINNER'S READY, YOU LOT!

BUT MICHELLE'S NOT BACK YET
WELL, IT'S ONLY GOING TO GET COLD IF WE WAIT
I'M SURE OUR MYSTERIOUS FRIEND -"RAVI"- CAN GIVE US SOME WONDERFUL REFLECTION ON HOW HE INVENTED WARM FOOD OR WHATEVER
OR MAYBE ONE OF US SUDDENLY HAS MAGIC FOOD-HEATING POWERS THAT HE CAN TELL US ALL ABOUT!
MUM, IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER I'D THINK YOU WEREN'T SUPER FOND OF THE GUY
BARGIN' INTO MY FAMILY, DROPPIN' EXPOSITION BOMBS ALL OVER WITHOUT EVEN A HOW-DO-YOU-DO.
IT'S JUST BAD MANNERS, IT IS!
IF I WANTED TO LIVE LIKE THIS I WOULD HAVE STAYED IN WONDERLAND.
WHERE BAD MANNERS ARE EXPECTED.

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CALM DOWN, MUM.
I'M PERFECTLY CALM!
I JUST DON'T APPRECIATE THE WAY THIS MAN JUST BARGES INTO OUR LIFE! THROWING EVERYTHING INTO QUESTION!
HE DOESN'T EVEN HAVE THE GOOD FORM TO ACT EMBARRASSED ABOUT IT--
GOOD NEWS!
WE HAVE RETURNED! AND I DO BELIEVE OUR YOUNG FRIEND HAS HAD SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED!
OH! IS IT DINNERTIME? SPLENDID!
FINN

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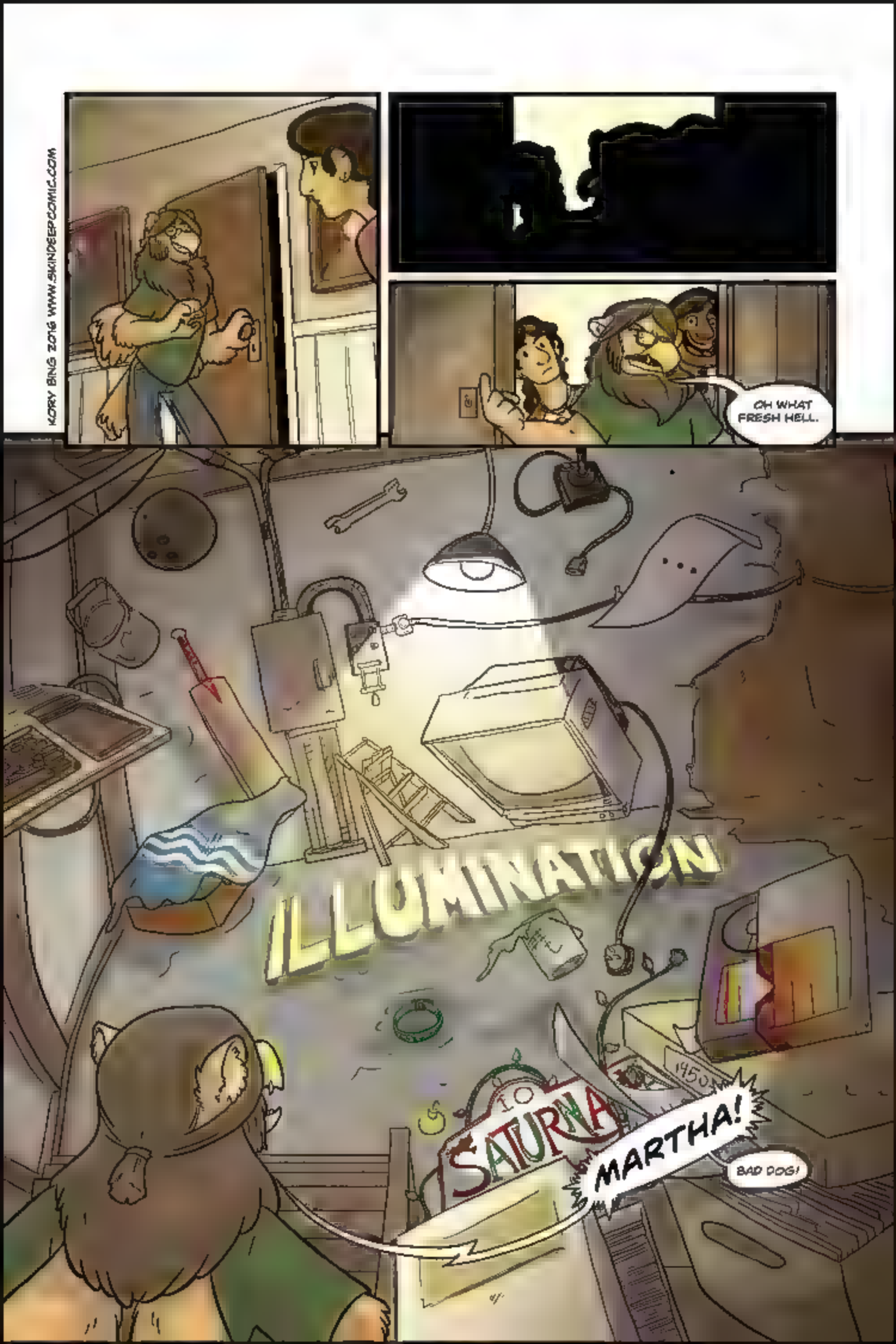
TO BE CONTINUED!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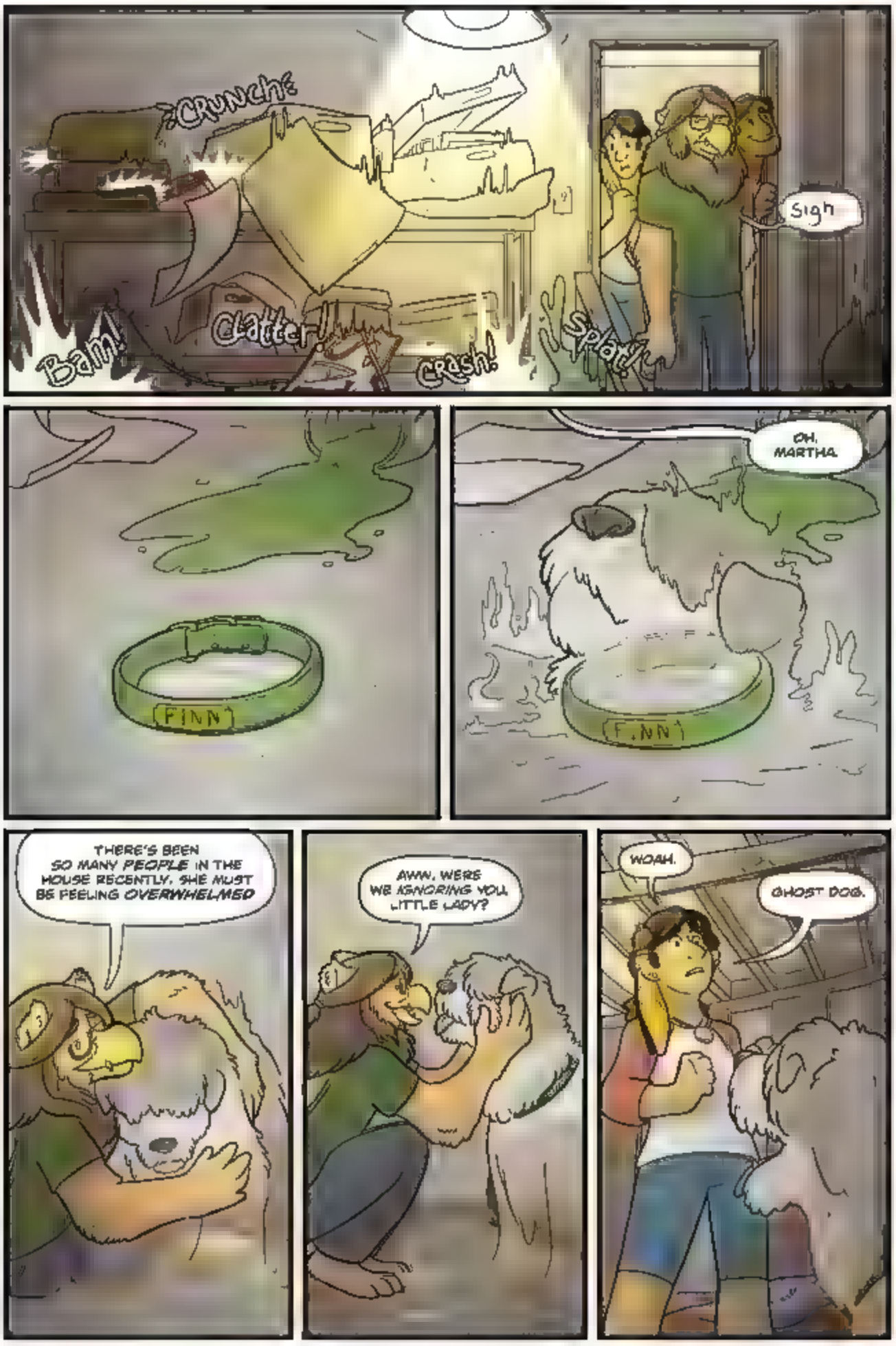
OH WHAT FRESH HELL.
ILLUMINATION
IO SATURNA
MARTHA!
BAD DOG!



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YOU CAN PET HER, MARTHA HERE IS A HUGE BABY
SHE LOVES EVERYONE.
Leeeaaahnnn
SO HOW DOES THIS.. WORK?
OH, WHO KNOWS, YEAH?
SHE WAS ME FATHER'S DOG WHEN HE WAS YOUNG.
STORY GOES THAT SHE LOVED HIM SO MUCH SHE NEVER WANTED TO LEAVE HIM.
SO SHE JUST STUCK AROUND INSIDE HER OLD COLLAR.
Pet Pet
Pet
Good Dog
Pet
YES. THERE ARE CERTAINLY MANY MYSTERIES IN THIS WORLD THAT HAVE YET TO BE EXPLAINED. AND PERHAPS NEVER WILL BE!
GHOSTS AND SHADES, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE VERY HARD TO PIN-DOWN AND EXPLAIN WITH ANY SORT OF SCIENCE!
THEY DO NOT ALWAYS WORK BY OUR LAWS OF–
yawn
–OH, JIM.
zzzzz
Whump

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WE SHOULD HEAD INTO THE CAVERNS BEFORE WE'RE MISSED
I'LL GET THE LIGHTS ON IN THERE, IN CASE ANYONE NEEDS THEM.
I'M PRETTY SURE I CAN SEE IN THE DARK
AW. YOU WANNA COME TOO, LADY?
GRRRGH
YOU KNOW I CAN'T SAY NO TO YOU, MARTHA.
OH! THIS IS THE ENTRANCE!
THIS IS MUCH EASIER THAN HOW WE USED TO GET DOWN HERE.
GOODNESS, SO MUCH HAS CHANGED!

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-IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE THAN, HMMM. LET'S SEE HERE..
IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, THE OPINICI LIVE TO BE ABOUT 200, AND THIS HAPPENED IN..
... I'M SORRY, I KNOW IT MUST COME AS A SURPRISE TO YOU. BUT I DON'T HAVE THE BEST SENSE OF TIME.
IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE THAN MAYBE FOUR OR FIVE GENERATIONS REMOVED FROM WHEN I FIRST CAST THE GIFT
HOW ON EARTH HAVE YOU ALL FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT SO EASILY?
WE KNOW THAT PHINEAS HAD A RED MANE AND HIS DAUGHTER HAD A GREEN ONE. BUT WE DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW MUCH ABOUT THAT LONG AGO.
THAT IS SO.
SO IRRESPONSIBLE!
ALL THAT INFORMATION LOST IN SO LITTLE TIME!?
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NOT A LOT HAS BEEN WRITTEN DOWN OUT OF FEAR OF DISCOVERY BY HUMANS OR THOSE WHO SEEK THE EGG.
ALSO, THE FINNS SEEM TO HAVE A KNACK FOR EXAGGERATION. SO WHAT HAS BEEN WRITTEN DOWN IS A LITTLE DUBIOUS.
..ALSO, IT'S BEEN LIKE 800 YEARS!
HMM.
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN PHINEAS WASN'T RESPONSIBLE ENOUGH FOR THIS.
I GIVE HIM ALL THIS POWER AND WHAT DOES HE DO, WASTE IT!
A WHOLE FAMILY OF UNGRATEFUL BUFFOONS GETTING ON BY DUMB LUCK. THAT'S ALL THE FINNS WILL EVER BE.
I THOUGHT MAYBE THE RESPONSIBILITY WOULD HAVE GIVEN PHINEAS SOME MATURITY BUT I GUESS THAT WAS TOO MUCH TO-
-NOW THAT IS ENOUGH!

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I'M SORRY?
I HAVE BEEN MORE THAN PATIENT WITH YOU, MISTER RAVI.
BUT I CANNOT CONTINUE IF YOU ARE GOING TO SLANDER MY FAMILY NAME SO CASUALLY AND SO OFTEN!
YOU ACT AS IF WE HAVE WILLFULLY FORGOTTEN AND BURIED OUR HISTORY!
WELL, I DO NOT SEE HOW ELSE IT COULD HAVE HAPPENED.
TO HAVE SUCH A BEAUTIFUL GIFT BESTOWED UPON YOU AND SQUANDER IT LIKE IT WAS NOTHING!
HOW THE EGG HAS SURVIVED THIS LONG IS AN OUTRIGHT MIRACLE.
AGAIN WITH THE DISRESPECTFUL MUCKRAKING!
I AM ON MY LAST NERVE WITH YOU!

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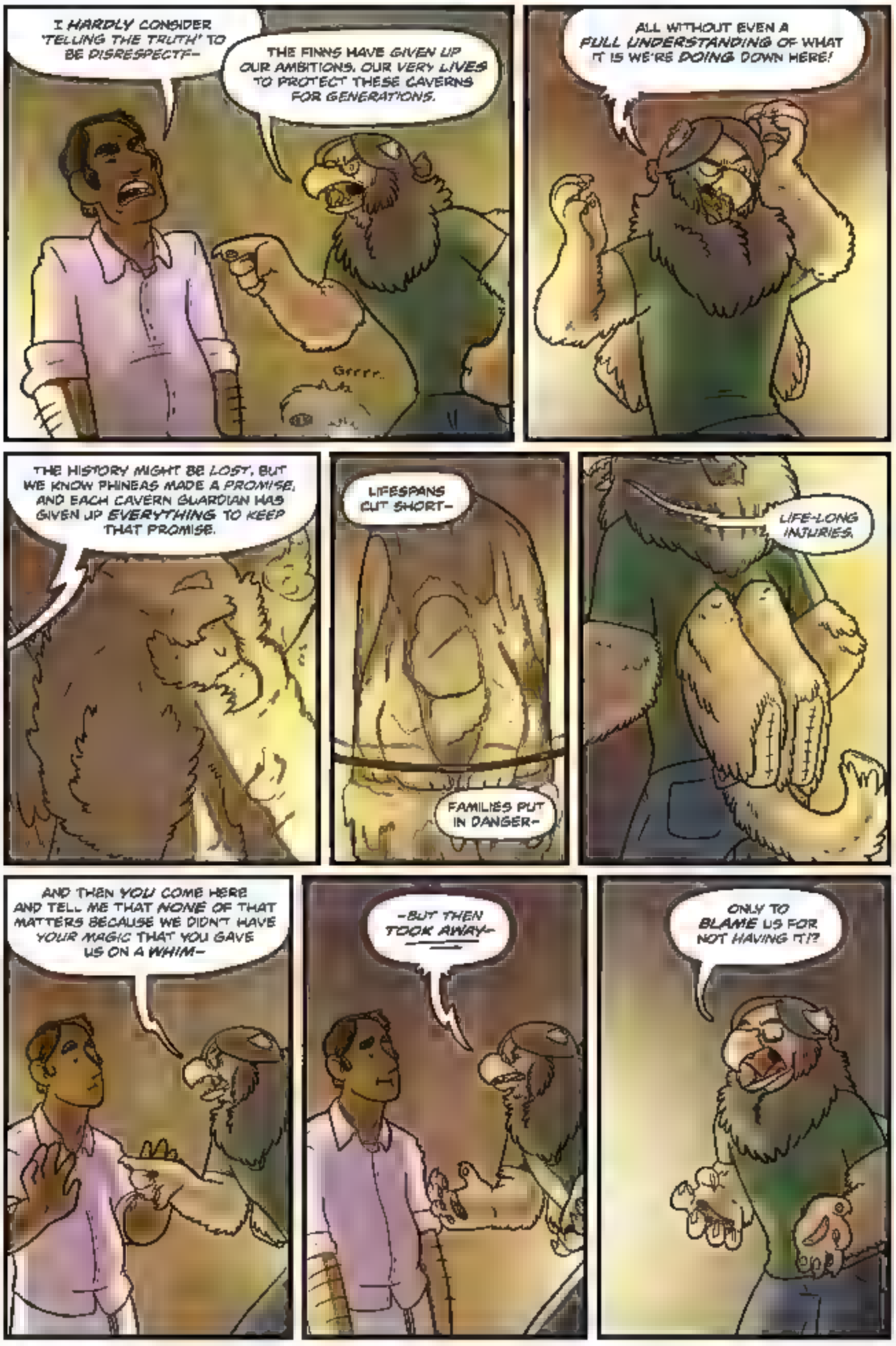
I HARDLY CONSIDER 'TELLING THE TRUTH' TO BE DISRESPECTF—
THE FINNS HAVE GIVEN UP OUR AMBITIONS. OUR VERY LIVES TO PROTECT THESE CAVERNS FOR GENERATIONS.
Grrrr.
ALL WITHOUT EVEN A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT IS WE'RE DOING DOWN HERE!
THE HISTORY MIGHT BE LOST, BUT WE KNOW PHINEAS MADE A PROMISE, AND EACH CAVERN GUARDIAN HAS GIVEN UP EVERYTHING TO KEEP THAT PROMISE.
LIFESPANS CUT SHORT—
FAMILIES PUT IN DANGER—
LIFE-LONG INJURIES.
AND THEN YOU COME HERE AND TELL ME THAT NONE OF THAT MATTERS BECAUSE WE DIDN'T HAVE YOUR MAGIC THAT YOU GAVE US ON A WHIM—
—BUT THEN TOOK AWAY—
ONLY TO BLAME US FOR NOT HAVING IT!?

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IF YOU WERE SO CONCERNED ABOUT THIS "GIFT" OF YOURS, YOU COULD HAVE DONE A LITTLE MORE THAN JUST ASSUME EVERYTHING WAS FINE
SIR, I-
AND WHEN YOU'RE NOT INSULTING OUR SACRIFICES YOU ARE TELLING US ALL HUGE, HISTORY-CHANGING REVELATIONS AND ACTING LIKE WE SHOULD ALREADY KNOW THIS INFORMATION!
OH! AND THEN YOU REFUSE TO EXPLAIN ANY OF WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT! YOU ARE INFURIATING!
I HAVE BEEN TRYING VERY HARD, MISTER RAVI, TO GIVE YOU THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT-
-BUT MY FATHER DIED FOR THESE CAVERNS AND I WILL NOT HAVE YOU TREAT US LIKE THIS!
OH DEAR, IS HE MAD?
OH, YOU THINK??
hmmmm

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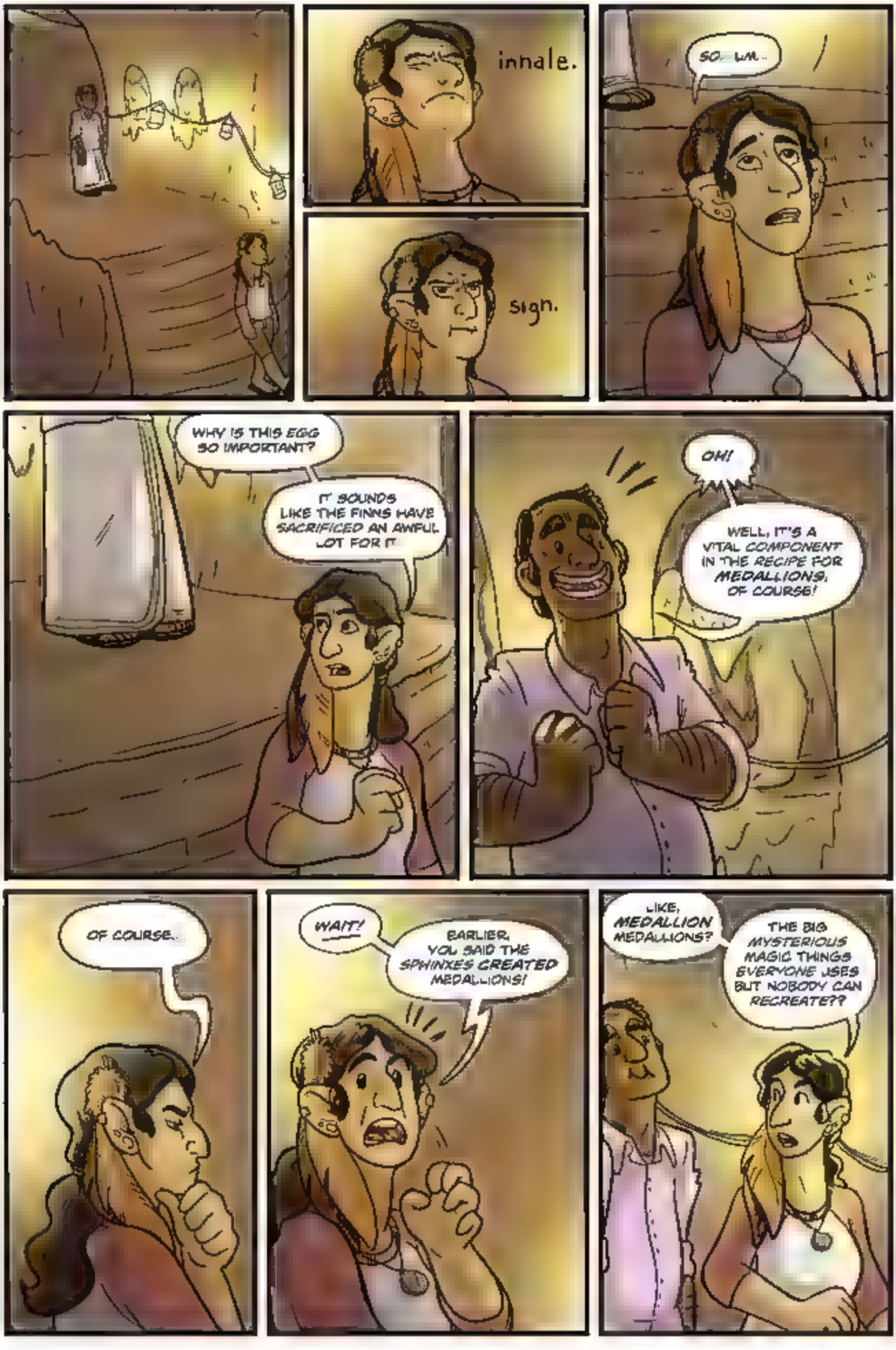
inhale.
sigh.
SO... UM...
WHY IS THIS EGG SO IMPORTANT?
IT SOUNDS LIKE THE FINNS HAVE SACRIFICED AN AWFUL LOT FOR IT
OH!
WELL, IT'S A VITAL COMPONENT IN THE RECIPE FOR MEDALLIONS, OF COURSE!
OF COURSE.
WAIT!
EARLIER, YOU SAID THE SPHINXES CREATED MEDALLIONS!
LIKE, MEDALLION MEDALLIONS?
THE BIG MYSTERIOUS MAGIC THINGS EVERYONE USES BUT NOBODY CAN RECREATE??

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OH, INDEED!
YET ANOTHER VITAL PIECE OF HISTORY LOST TO THE AGES, IT SEEMS.
ALTHOUGH, I SUPPOSE THAT ONE WAS MORE BY DESIGN THAN ANY SORT OF NEGLECT.
SO, WHAT, DOES THIS EGG UNLOCK ALL THE SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE OR WHATEVER?
OH, NOT AT ALL, DEAR!
THE EGG IS A CONCENTRATED MIX OF STRONG AND UNIQUE MAGICAL COMPONENTS, BUT I DOUBT IT HOLDS ANYTHING MORE THAN THAT
YOU SAY YOU HAVE VISIONS SOMETIMES, YES?
WOAH
UGH YEAH.
THEY'RE IMPOSSIBLE TO TRIGGER INTENTIONALLY, AND WHEN I HAVE THEM THEY MAKE NO SENSE AND CONFUSE ME MORE THAN ANYTHING.
HMMM
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THIS COULD ALL BE CONJECTURE, BUT I BELIEVE YOU MAY BE ACCESSING SOME AMOUNT OF ANCESTRAL MAGIC DURING THESE VISIONS.
IF YOU RECEIVED A VISION FROM TOUCHING PHINEAS'S GRAVE, PERHAPS YOU'LL GET ONE FROM THE EGG!
AFTER ALL, IT HAS MUCH MORE OF A CONNECTION TO YOUR KIND THAN A GRYPHON'S TOMB!
My kind.
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT
THIS IS EXCITING!
THIS COUNTRY HAS ALWAYS BEEN SUCH AN EXCITING PLACE. SOMETIMES I WONDER WHY I EVER LEFT!
WHY DID YOU LEAVE?
DIDN'T YOU SAY THAT LEAVING WAS WHAT CAUSED THE FINNS TO LOSE YOUR GIFT IN THE FIRST PLACE?
AH, ERM.
YES.

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OBVIOUSLY I DIDN'T KNOW MY MAGIC WOULD BE CUT OFF WHEN I RETURNED TO MY HOMELANDS, ELSE I WOULD HAVE RETURNED IMMEDIATELY!
AND YOU DIDN'T THINK TO CHECK FOR, HOW LONG DID MR. FINN SAY?
800 YEARS?
I MAY HAVE BEEN. SLEEPING. FOR A NUMBER OF CENTURIES.
IT GETS OVERWHELMING SOMETIMES, BEING ME
I FIND SKIPPING A FEW YEARS TO BE A GOOD SOLUTION.
AND WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING, MR. FINN'S ANCESTORS GUARDED THIS VERY IMPORTANT ARTIFACT—
—WITHOUT ANY SORT OF HELP FROM YOU OR YOUR GIFTS—
—BUT THEY'RE THE LAZY, UNGRATEFUL ONES?
WELL I.
HMM.

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MISTER FINN!
I FEAR I MUST .. APOLOGIZE.
I AM...AWARE THAT THE WAY I PERCEIVE THE WORLD IS. DIFFERENT THAN IT IS FOR MORTALS.
I HAVE BEEN ALIVE FOR A VERY, VERY, LONG TIME. I FIND THAT I SEE PATTERNS AND MAKE CONNECTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEINGS WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF CENTURIES OF EXPERIENCE SIMPLY CANNOT

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PLEASE BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY I AM TRYING TO BE AS CLEAR AS POSSIBLE. I KNOW THAT I HAVE THE TENDENCY TO COMMUNICATE IN WAYS THAT YOUNGER BEINGS OFTEN FIND FRUSTRATING.
I DON'T MEAN THAT AS AN INSULT!
SPEAKING IN RIDDLES, CONFUSING METAPHORS, EXPECTING EVERYONE TO BE ON THE SAME PAGE. IT'S A COMMUNICATION ISSUE WITH BEINGS THAT TEND TO SEE AND LIVE ON A DIFFERENT LEVEL OF EXISTENCE.
SO TO SPEAK
IT IS EASY TO JUST LEAVE. TAKE REFUGE IN SOME REMOTE, UNCHANGING PLACE FOR A WHILE, WAIT FOR THE WORLD TO FORGET YOU, COME BACK FRESH
I FEAR IT EVEN BECAME TOO MUCH FOR ME THOUGH I SAY I LOVE THIS WORLD. I ABANDONED IT FOR SOME TIME WITHOUT PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE REPERCUSSIONS.
THAT IS A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD, TO WANT THE WORLD TO FORGET BUT EXPECT IT TO REMEMBER SO MUCH.

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IT IS SO EASY TO FORGET HOW FAST THE WORLD CAN MOVE WHEN I AM ASLEEP
TRY TO IMAGINE VISITING AN ANT HILL, LEAVING FOOD, GIVING IT SHADE PROTECTING IT FROM PREDATORS.
BUT THEN THE NEXT DAY THERE ARE NOW FOUR WARRING ANT HILLS. THE FOOD YOU GAVE IS GONE, AND THE SHADE YOU PROVIDED HAS BEEN KNOCKED OVER!
???
OH!
NOT THAT I THINK OF MORTALS AS ANTS, OF COURSE!
THERE TENDS TO BE AN EXPECTATION THAT IMMORTALS SHOULD BE PERFECT AND KNOW EVERYTHING.
SO SOMETIMES, I FAKE IT.
YEH, THAT SOUNDS ROUGH, MATE.
SO THE NEXT TIME YOU WANT TO TELL ANY OF US THAT WE'RE WASTING OUR POTENTIAL, YOU CAN THINK OF THAT LITTLE SPEECH YOU JUST GAVE AND KEEP YOUR COMMENTS TO YOURSELF.

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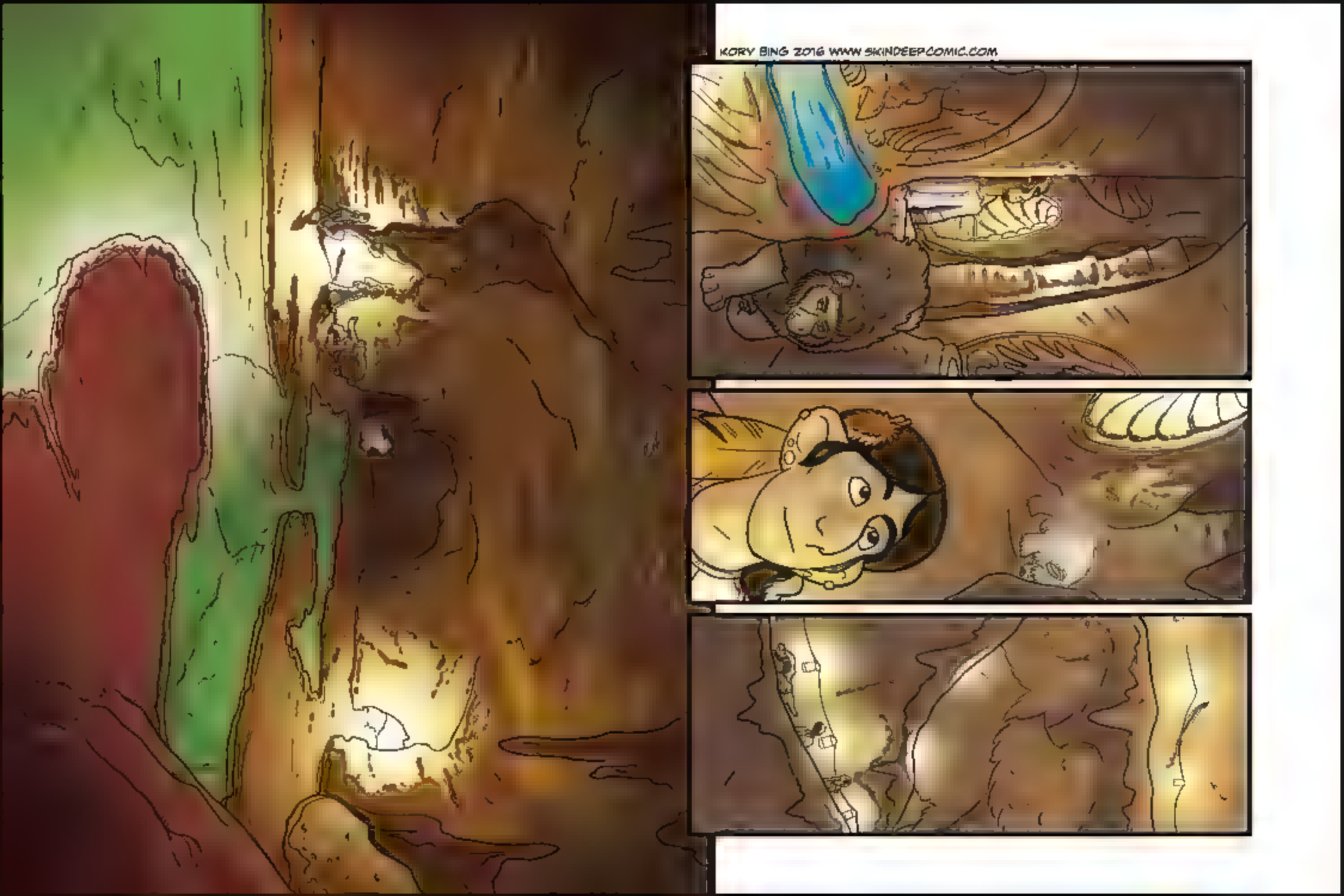
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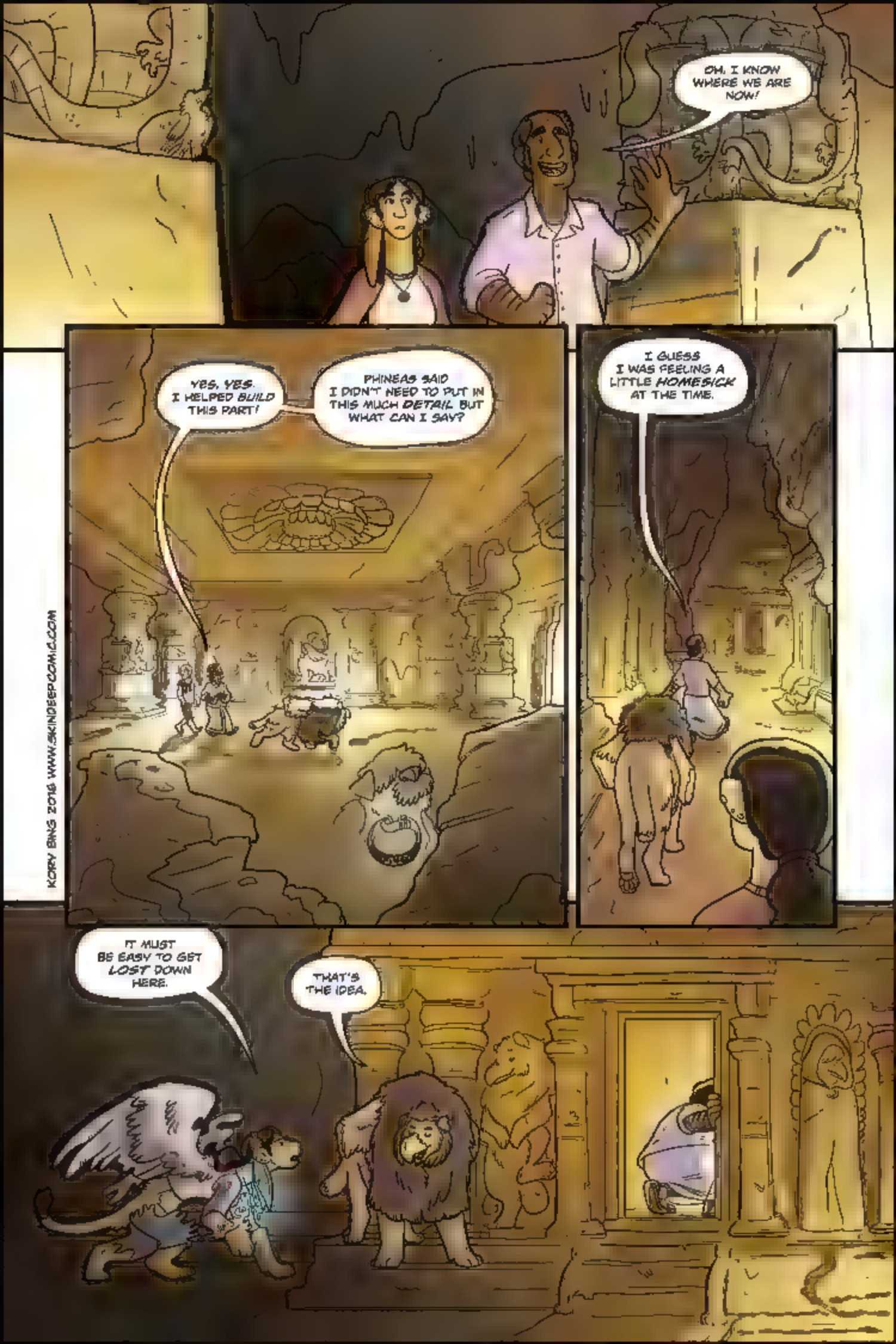
OH, I KNOW WHERE WE ARE NOW!
YES, YES. I HELPED BUILD THIS PART!
PHINEAS SAID I DIDN'T NEED TO PUT IN THIS MUCH DETAIL BUT WHAT CAN I SAY?
I GUESS I WAS FEELING A LITTLE HOMESICK AT THE TIME.
IT MUST BE EASY TO GET LOST DOWN HERE.
THAT'S THE IDEA.
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WELL HERE WE ARE!
GREAT!
WHERE ARE WE?
THE ENTRANCE TO THE EGG ROOM!
.. REALLY?
AFTER SOME OF THE OTHER ROOMS WE WENT THROUGH I EXPECTED A LITTLE MORE.
... GRANDEUR?

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WELL. WE'RE TRYING TO KEEP PEOPLE OUT OF THIS ROOM, YOU KNOW.
PULLING ATTENTION AWAY FROM THE REAL PRIZE!
VERY CLEVER, MISTER FINN!
THE WHOLE CAVE SYSTEM WAS BUILT FOR THIS?
THE CAVE WAS—
ACTUALLY THERE WAS A CAVE HERE BEFORE WE STARTED BUILDING IT. BUT WE EXPANDED IT QUITE A BIT DURING CONSTRUCTION.

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ALTHOUGH THAT WALL ILLUSION FOR THE DOOR IS NEW TO ME..
IT WAS ADDED BY MY GRANDFATHER
SUCH CLEVERNESS THE FINNS HAVE!
SO THIS ISN'T AN ACTUAL EGG?
WHEN A PHOENIX IS READY TO DIE AND BE REBORN, IT MAKES A NEST OUT OF VARIOUS MATERIALS, PRECIOUS AND MAGICAL
WHEN IT COMBUSTS, THE FIRE MELTS EVERYTHING INTO THIS EGG, PROTECTING THE NEW BABY PHOENIX INSIDE.
EVENTUALLY, THE HEAT FROM THE EGG MELTS THE HOLES IN THE TOP, LETTING OUT THE MAGIC AND PROVIDING AN OPENING FOR THE NEW PHOENIX TO EMERGE!
THAT SOUNDS COMPLICATED.
THAT IS WHY THEY ARE SO RARE!
THEY ARE ALMOST ENTIRELY PURE MAGIC!

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I WONDER IF I CAN GET ANYTHING FROM THIS...
CAREFUL, MICHELLE. IT IS STILL PRETTY HOT
THEY USED TO ASK US FOR HELP AND TREAT US AS HOLY. BUT LATELY WE'RE BECOMING MERE HUNTING TROPHIES.
HOW DO THEY ALWAYS FIND US?

THE SHAPESHIFTERS HAVE HAD FEW PROBLEMS, THEY LIVE RIGHT UNDER THEIR NOSES AND ARE ONLY FOUND OUT IF THEY WANT TO BE FOUND OUT
HUMANS WON'T EXPECT US TO LOOK LIKE THEM!
SORCERY IS UNRELIABLE, ANY LITTLE THING CAN SET OFF A CHAIN REACTION. WE NEED SOMETHING STABLE.
SOMETHING SMALL, PORTABLE. SOMETHING THAT WON'T BE NOTICEABLE.
WHAT IS THAT? DRAGONS?
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT MATERIAL THEY'RE MADE OUT OF. IT JUST NEEDS TO LAST
NO!
THEY CAN'T POSSIBLY THINK THIS IS A GOOD IDEA. THEY'LL DAMN ALL OF US!
THEY KEEP FINDING AND DESTROYING OUR SMITHS, THEY'RE TRYING TO JUST TAKE THE MEDALLIONS!
WE HAVE NO CHOICE NOW. WE MUST FIGHT BACK

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ARE YOU SURE? YOUR VISIONS HAVE BEEN. .
.. VAGUE...
..AS OF LATE.
IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE DRAGONS COME FOR US.
THERE AREN'T MANY MEDALLION SMITHS LEFT.
THEY'D KNOW TO LOOK FOR US HERE!
WE BARELY KNOW WHAT IS EVEN GOING ON IN THE MAINLAND, JO.
HALF THE NEWS THAT COMES UP TO THIS FORSAKEN ISLAND IS MIXED UP WITH TALL TALES ABOUT THE FIGHTING IN THE HOLY LANDS AND OBVIOUSLY FALSE STORIES ABOUT MONSTERS IN THE FAR EAST.
KNOCK
WE CAN'T TAKE ANYTHING WE HEAR AT FACE VALUE, YOU KNOW THAT-
I KNOW WHAT I SAW!
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

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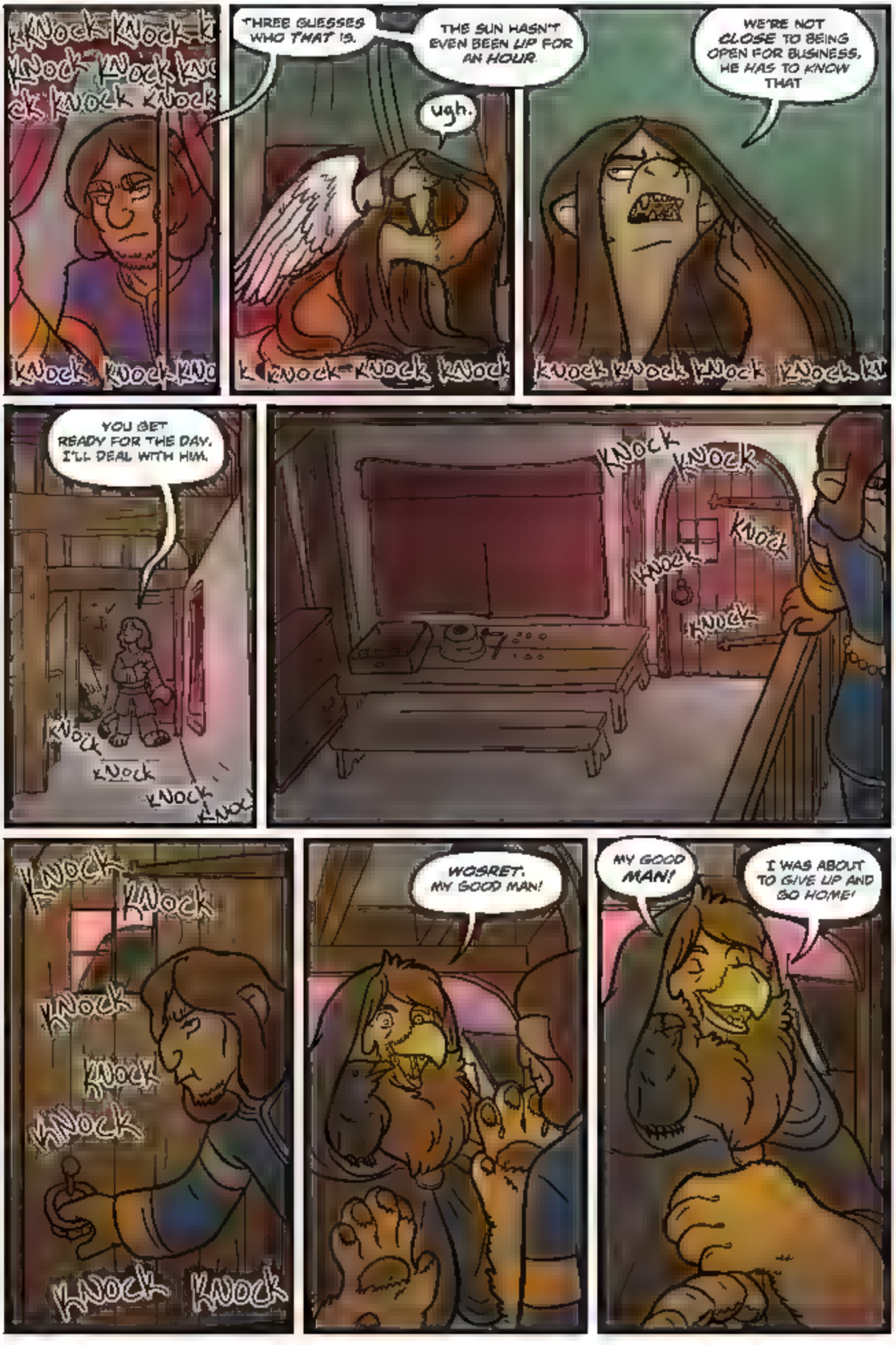

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PHINEAS, THERE IS NO CONCEIVABLE WAY ON THIS GOOD EARTH THAT YOU BELIEVE IT IS EVEN CLOSE TO BEING AN ACCEPTABLE TIME OF MORNING.
WE DON'T OPEN FOR HOURS.
IS IT THAT EARLY?
GOODNESS! I HAD OVERESTIMATED WHAT TIME IT WAS, SILLY ME!
I DIDN'T GET TO SLEEP LAST NIGHT, YOU SEE.
I WAS USING YOUR FABULOUS INVENTION TO VISIT A HUMAN PUBLIC HOUSE!
I PURCHASED HUMAN BEER WITH HUMAN MONEY USING MY HUMAN THUMBS!
IT WAS BRILLIANT!
YES, A PERFECT SHINING EXAMPLE OF WHY MY KIND PUTS OUR LIVES ON THE LINE TO CREATE MEDALLIONS. THANK YOU.
YOU'RE WELCOME!

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I CAN'T HELP BUT NOTICE YOU HAVEN'T YET COMMENTED ON MY MIDFORM!
TWO LEGS!
AND I MENTIONED THUMBS, YES?
I EVEN GOT THIS NEAT CLOAK TO WEAR.
YOU KNOW, LIKE PEOPLE DO!
PHINEAS, IT IS VERY EARLY.
IS THERE A REASON WHY YOU WERE KNOCKING ON OUR DOOR?
HMM?
OH!
YES!
SO AS YOU KNOW, I'M SURE, THE ELDERS HAVE AGREED TO LET NEMEAN LIONS LIVE HERE!
YES. I HAD HEARD THAT
WELL, I HAVE THIS NEMEAN FRIEND WHO IS MOVING IN WITH THE PRIDE. AND I WAS HOPING THAT--
NO.

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WE DON'T MAKE MEDALLIONS FOR NEMEANS, PHINEAS.
BUT SURELY THE ELDERS SAYING THAT THEY CAN LIVE HERE PROVES THAT THEY ARE NOT DANGEROUS!
IT'S NOT UP TO ME, THE SPHINX LEADERS DECIDE WHO DOES AND DOES NOT GET MEDALLIONS.
NEMEANS WERE DEEMED TOO VOLATILE TO BE TRUSTED W
BUT THAT'S OBVIOUSLY NOT TRUE!
I'M SORRY, PHINEAS. BUT-
I'LL DO IT.
WHAT!?
REALLY?
JOCASTA, YOU KNOW WE CAN'T-
WE CAN DO WHATEVER WE WANT, WOSRET.
WE'RE SPHINXES.
WE MAKE MEDALLIONS TO PROTECT US FROM THE HUMAN THREAT.
BUT, THE SPHINX LEADERS SAID-

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REFUSING MEDALLIONS IS THE SOURCE OF ALL THE PROBLEMS ON THE MAINLAND!
WHO ARE WE TO CREATE THIS GIFT AND THEN DENY IT TO SOME FOR ARBITRARY REASONS?
THE REASONS AREN'T ARBITRARY YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO THAT-
BRING YOUR NEMEAN FRIEND AROUND, PHINEAS. I'LL MAKE THEM A MEDALLION.
JOCASTA!
LET THE OTHERS STOP ME!
THEN THEY'D HAVE TO COME UP HERE TO THIS DESOLATE ISLAND THEMSELVES!
AND I COULD GIVE THEM AN EARFUL PERSONALLY!
I AM TIRED OF PLAYING GOD WITH OUR MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY, WOSRET.
I'LL TAKE THAT COIN DIE THANK YOU.

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IT'S OUR TECHNOLOGY, WE HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO USE IT AS WE SEE FIT!
AND I SEE FIT TO NOT LEAVE ANYONE EXPOSED TO THE CRUELTY OF THE HUMANS IF THERE'S SOMETHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT
PHINEAS, BRING YOUR FRIEND
DO NOT, PHINEAS!
I'LL MAKE ENOUGH FOR THE ENTIRE PRIDE.
JOCASTA!
MS. JOCASTA!
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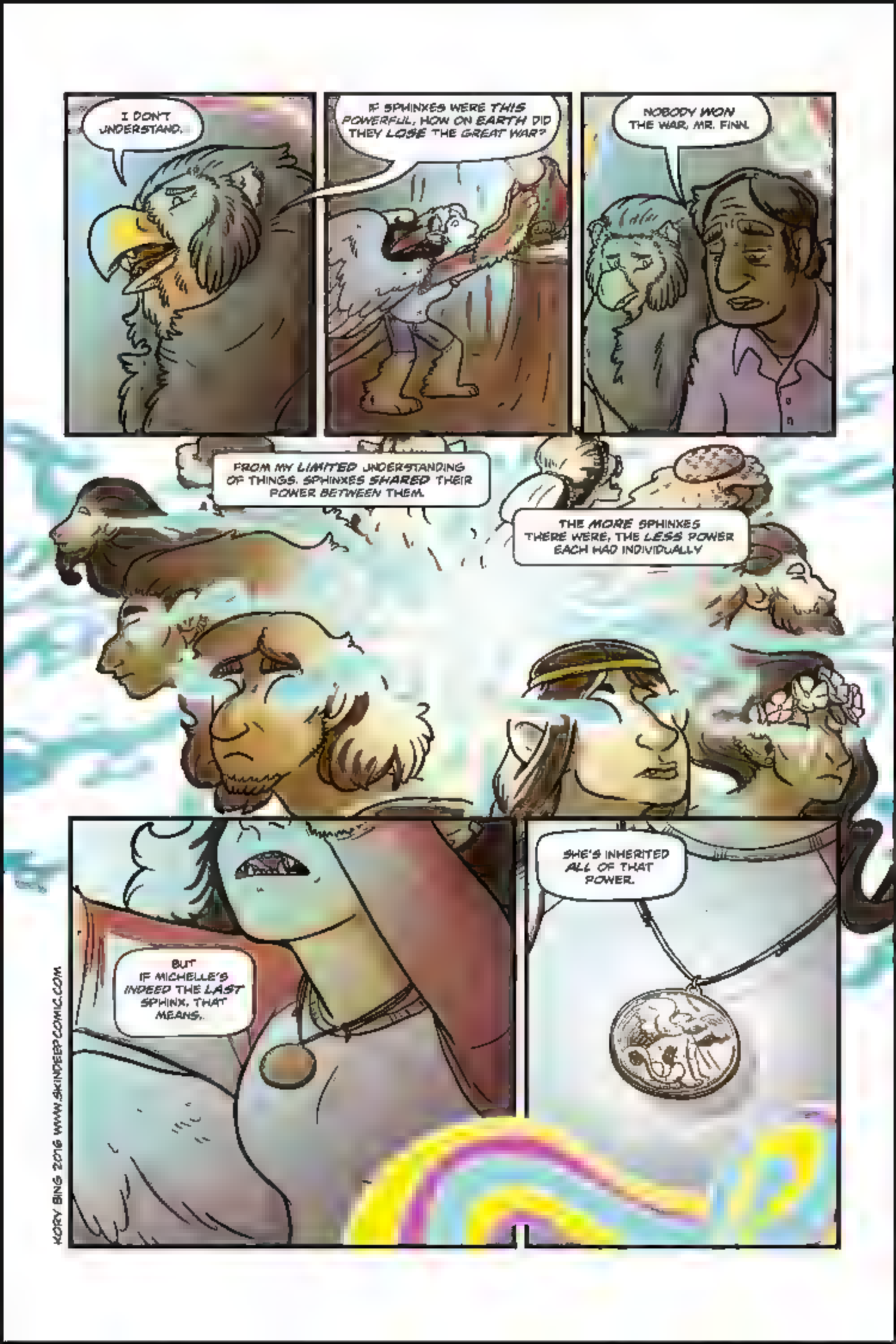
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
IF SPHINXES WERE THIS POWERFUL, HOW ON EARTH DID THEY LOSE THE GREAT WAR?
NOBODY WON THE WAR, MR. FINN.
FROM MY LIMITED UNDERSTANDING OF THINGS, SPHINXES SHARED THEIR POWER BETWEEN THEM.
THE MORE SPHINXES THERE WERE, THE LESS POWER EACH HAD INDIVIDUALLY
BUT IF MICHELLE'S INDEED THE LAST SPHINX, THAT MEANS..
SHE'S INHERITED ALL OF THAT POWER.
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HOW DO WE KNOW SHE WON'T COMPLETELY LOSE HERSELF TO WHATEVER IT IS SHE'S SEEING RIGHT NOW?
I HAVEN'T ANY EXPERIENCE WITH THIS KIND OF MAGIC!
WHAT IF IT'S TOO MUCH FOR HER?
IT'S TOO LATE TO STOP, I'M AFRAID!
WE'RE SEEING THE START OF SOMETHING VERY NEW AND VERY POWERFUL.
GASP
SEEMS THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET VERY INTERESTING, MY FRIEND!
COME AGAIN?
OH, IT'S AN OLD CURSE I HEARD IN MY YOUTH..
"MAY YOU LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES."

TO BE CONCLUDED!

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MIDEN
CHAPTER 5
DINNER SMELLS WONDERFUL!
SHALL WE EAT?
WHAT ON EARTH HAPPENED DOWN THERE?
MICHELLE?
MICHELLE!!
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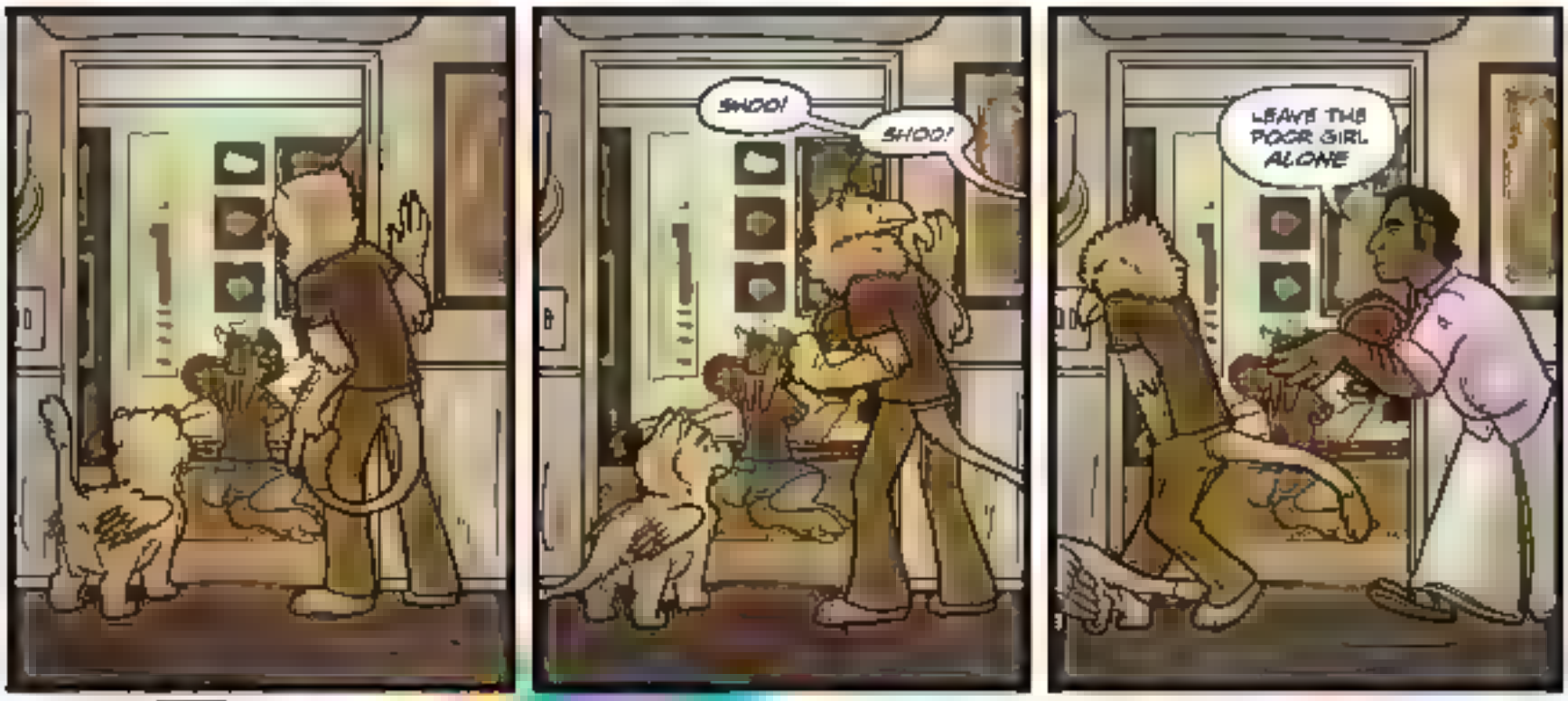

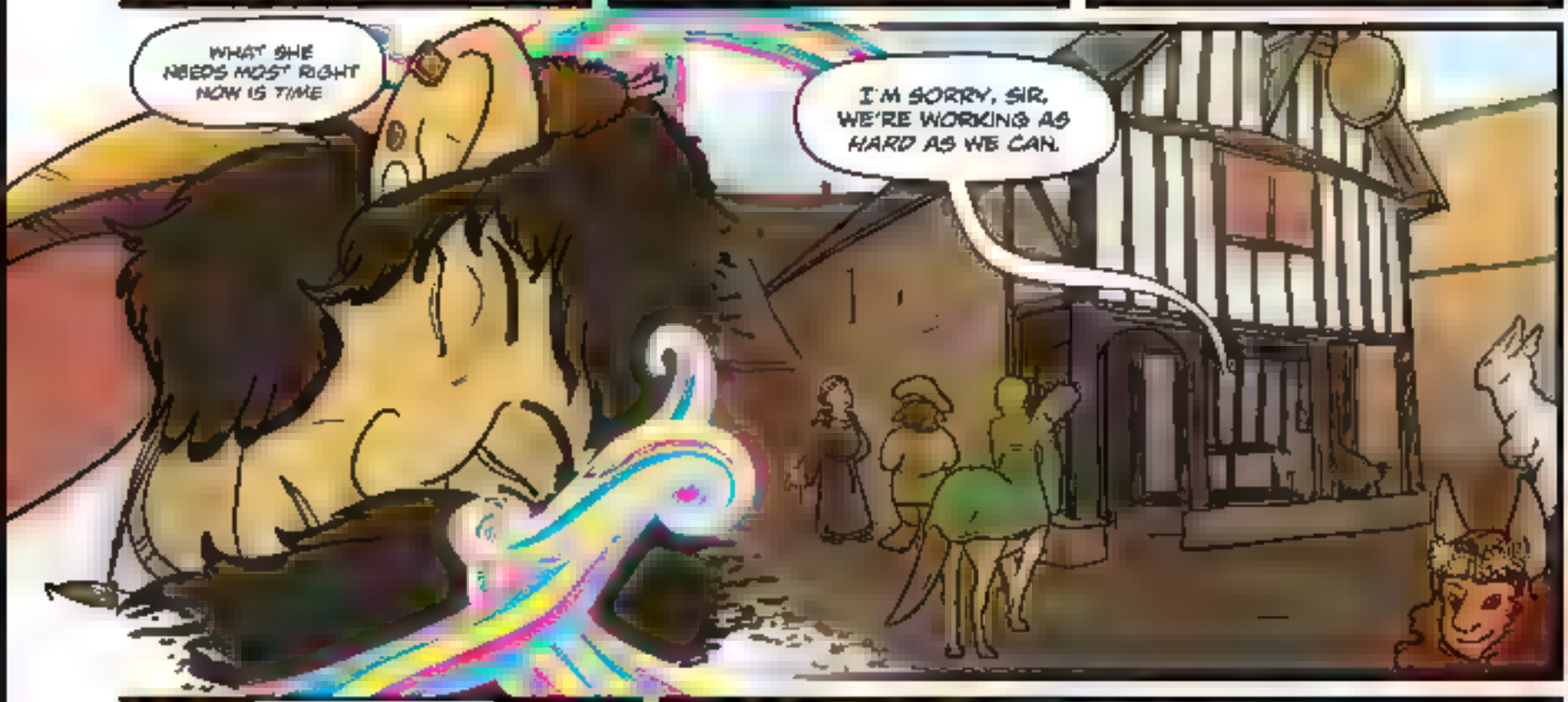

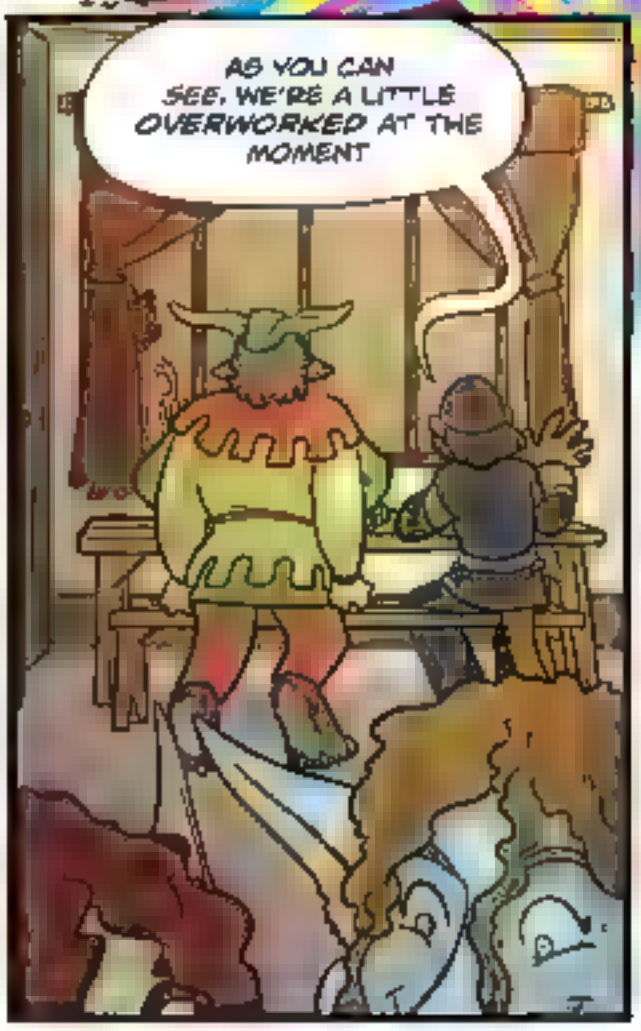

OH, I KEN WHY YER OVERWORKED, ALL RIGHT.
YER SPENDIN ALL YER TIME ON THAT PRIDE OF MONSTERS!
SINCE THEY MOVED IN YE'VE BEEN GIVIN' ALL THE GOOD FOLKS' MEDALLIONS OUT TO TH' ANIMALS!

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WHAT DID YOU DO TO HER!?
OH, SHE IS PERFECTLY WELL.
I IMAGINE SHE IS PROCESSING A LOT OF NEW INFORMATION.
HMM.
SEEMS TO HAVE SHUT DOWN EXTERNAL STIMULI.
BUT SHE'LL SNAP OUT OF IT SOON.
I MUST SAY THOUGH, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN HELPFUL TO KNOW THAT SHE WASN'T PREVIOUSLY CONNECTED TO HER SPECIES' POWER AND KNOWLEDGE!
IF I HAD KNOWN THAT I WOULD HAVE TRIED TO EXPLAIN MYSELF BETTER!
OKAY LOOK. I KNOW YOU LIVE ON SOME DIFFERENT PLANE FROM US POOR MORTALS OR WHATEVER..
. BUT IF YOU DON'T STOP TALKING I AM GOING TO HEADBUTT YOU.
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WE'RE OUT OF SATYR MEDALLIONS RIGHT NOW, YOU HAVE TO WAIT LIKE THE OTHERS.

AND DON'T START THAT MONSTER SHITE WITH ME, KESTER.

SATYRS WERE ONE OF THE FIRST RACES TO GET MEDALLIONS!

WHY SHOULD I HAFTA WAIT BEHIND SOME FELINE HEATHENS TO GET ME OWN??

YOU'RE WELCOME TO COMMISSION ANY OTHER SPHINX IN THE BRITISH ISLES IF YOU FIND OUR MERCHANDISE UNSATISFACTORY, SIRE

YOU'RE THE ONLY SPHINXES IN THE COUNTRY!

OH, ARE WE??

WELL, YOU CAN ALWAYS HOPE FOR A RELATIVE TO PASS SO YOU CAN INHERIT THEIR MEDALLION..

OR YOU CAN WAIT YOUR TURN WITH THE REST OF THE UNWASHED MASSES.

..

HOW DARE YOU, MADAM!

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GREG?
MICHELLE!
ARE YOU OKAY?
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
WHAT HAPPENED?
ARE YOU HURT?
YOU SMELL LIKE GRASS
WHAT DID YOU DO!?
I TOLD YOU!
SHE HAS ACCESSED HER FULL POTENTIAL AND IS PROCESSING A LOT OF NEW INFORMATION!
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN??
GREG?
YES! MICHELLE I'M HERE. WHAT IS IT?
IS IT DINNER TIME YET?
SHE ASKS WHAT WE'RE ALL THINKING!

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YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE LAST OF ME!

FLAME

EVERY DAY WITH THIS. IT SEEMS.

GIVE THEM THE *SMALLEST* AMOUNT OF POWER AND *SUDDENLY* THEY'RE BETTER THAN ALL THE *OTHER* CREATURES.

YOU SEE WHY WE ARE MAKING NEMEAN MEDALLIONS, THEN?

SOMETIMES I WONDER WHY WE MAKE MEDALLIONS AT *ALL*.

IT'S THE *HUMANS* THAT ARE THE PROBLEM. WHY DO WE ALL WANT TO *PRETEND* TO *BE* THEM?

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ALL RIGHT, GET HER TO THE DRAWING ROOM. LET HER LIE DOWN AND GIVE HER SOME SPACE!
BUT WHAT ABOUT DINNER?
THE FITTLE WILL KEEP WHILE WE SORT THIS OUT.
OUT, OUT!
SIGH.
I THINK IT'S TIME THE ELDERS KNEW ABOUT THIS.
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THOSE BLOWHARDS WILL SAY, LUV.
YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE BLOWHARDS, JAMES.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU THREE WERE CLARTING ON ABOUT DOWN THERE. BUT YOU LOOK A RIGHT MESS.
WE'RE OUT OF OUR DEPTH WITH THIS.
I'M AFRAID WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF OTHERS KNOW ABOUT HER.
AT THIS POINT, I'M AFRAID WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THE OTHERS DON'T KNOW ABOUT HER.

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WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST FOR AN ALTERNATIVE?

EXTERMINATE AN ENTIRE SPECIES?

WELL... NO, BUT--

APOLOGIES, MISS SPHINX? DO WE TALK TO YOU ABOUT NIXIE MEDALLIONS?

OH YES, CHILD. LET ME HELP YOU!

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SIGH
YOU'RE RIGHT
I'LL GO MAKE THE CALL.
THERE YOU GO. LUV NICE AND COMFY.
MICHELLE. MICHELLE CAN YOU HEAR ME?
I THINK WE SHOULD JUST LET HER REST. IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S BEEN THROUGH A LOT
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
I DON'T KNOW, MATE.
BUT YOU ALWAYS KNOW!
YOU ALWAYS HAVE SOME SORT OF PLAN OR IDEA!
YOU HAD THE PLAN TO COME HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE!
THERE'S GOTTA BE A NEXT STEP OR SOME PROPHECY, OR, OR SOMETHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT WE CAN DO NEXT!
I... I DON'T
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.

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IT'S ABOUT *TIME* YOU SHOWED UP, DR. HOBBES.

I HAD *FIVE* PATIENTS TO RESCHEDULE BECAUSE OF THIS MEETING, NUALA.

SOME OF US CAN'T JUST DROP EVERYTHING THE *MOMENT* JAMES FINN CALLS A MEETING.

YES, WELL, WE CAN'T HAVE *HALF* THE *NEMEAN COUNCIL* ARRIVING LATE, CAN WE?

WE HAVE AN *IMAGE* TO UPHOLD, WESLEY.

OH, PUT IT BACK IN THE BOX, NUALA.

I AIN'T EVEN THE LAST HERE.

BARNABY'S MISSING.

WELL WE ALL KNOW WHY *THAT* IS.

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DON'T BE LIKE THAT, ORV.

AIN'T BEIN' "LIKE THAT" WHEN IT'S THE TRUTH.

SORRY!

SORRY, ALL!

AM I ON TIME? DID I MAKE IT ON TIME?

NAH. YER LATE. AND FOR SUCH AN IMPORTANT DATE, TOO.

DON'T START WITH ME TODAY. HYDE.

I DIDN'T COME ALL THE WAY FROM WONDERLAND ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE TO BE RIDICULED BY MY OWN PEERS!

AH, YES. YOU HAD TO COME ALL THE WAY OUT OF THE MIRROR IN THE LOO OR WHEREVER. TAKES AN AWFUL AMOUNT OF TIME.

I'D LIKE TO SEE HOW WELL YOU DO WITH TIME ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GLASS, ORVILLE.

OH LORD, I'D RATHER BE SET ON FIRE THAN GO TO THAT WHIMSICAL CESS PIT OF AN AVALON!

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ORV. PLEASE!

COULD YOU AT LEAST TRY TO ACT LIKE THE RESPECTED COMMUNITY LEADER THAT PEOPLE THINK YOU ARE?

YER ON TIME, LUV. WE'RE STILL WAITING ON JAMES.

MMM. WELL ANYONE KNOW WHAT THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT? HE WAS PRETTY SHORT ON DETAILS WITH ME.

HERE NEITHER. JUST SOMETHING ABOUT "GRAVE IMPORTANCE."

MY MONEY IS THAT NEWLY MEDALLIONED CUB OF HIS GOT INTO SOME SORTA TROUBLE ALREADY

YOU HEAR ABOUT HOW HE'S GOT BLUE HAIR?

GREAT, JUST WHAT WE NEED A SECOND JIMOTHY.

GREETINGS!

HELLO AND GREETINGS TO THE DISTINGUISHED COUNCIL OF ELDERS!

RAVI, WE TALKED ABOUT THIS. REMEMBER?

SO SORRY. YES. SILENCE. YOU TALK.

I DO NOT TALK.

TOTAL UNDERSTANDING.

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THANK YOU FOR MAKING IT TO THIS *IMPROMPTU* MEETING, COUNCILLORS.

I KNOW WE ALL HAVE BUSY LIVES. BUT BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY THIS IS OF AN *IMPORTANCE* NOT SEEN BY THIS AVALON FOR *MANY YEARS*.

QUIT *GRANDSTANDIN*, FINN. GET ON WITH IT

I'M SURE I DON'T NEED TO STATE THAT *EVERYTHING* SAID IN THESE QUARTERS ARE OF THE *UTMOST SECRECY*.

THIS IS INFORMATION THAT I BELIEVE IF IT WERE TO GET OUT *PREMATURELY* WE'D HAVE A RIGHT *PROBLEM* ON OUR HANDS

OH YES, I MAKE SURE TO TELL *ALL MY FRIENDS* AS SOON AS I LEAVE ABOUT *SECRET MEETING*.

YES. WELL..

AS LONG AS WE'RE ALL IN *AGREEMENT* ON THE *IMPORTANCE* OF *DISCRETION*...

...I SUPPOSE IT WOULD BE *EASIEST* TO GIVE THE FLOOR TO *MS. JOCASTA*.

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MY... MY NAME IS MICHELLE JOCASTA?

HELLO.

I'M STILL NEW TO ALL OF THIS SO WHILE I DON'T REALLY KNOW EXACTLY WHO Y'ALL ARE. BUT MR FINN TRUSTS YOU, SO I WILL TOO.

I, ERM.

SORRY, UM.

WELL I GUESS I'LL JUST *SHOW* YOU THEN.

POP!

WOULD ANYONE LIKE TO FILL MADAM L IN ON WHAT IS *HAPPENING*, PLEASE?

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THIS IS A TRICK, RIGHT?

YOU ARE A LAMMASU OR SOME SORT OF.. WINGED LION IN A UNIQUE MIDFORM. YES?

BLOODY HELL, FINN, IS THIS THE REASON THERE WAS SOME SORTA WEIRD MAGIC HOODOO COMIN' OUT FROM YOUR WAY LAST NIGHT?

YOU FOUND A BLEEDIN' SPHINX?

A SPHINX?

UM. YES. HELLO.

I'M A GRECIAN SPHINX, I GUESS?

FROM EVERYTHING I'VE GATHERED I SEEM TO BE THE, UH... LAST ONE.

I'VE SPENT THE LAST FEW MONTHS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO DO WITH MYSELF, AND JUST RECENTLY DISCOVERED A LOT OF NEW INFORMATION THAT I'M STILL TRYING TO PIECE TOGETHER AND UNDERSTAND.

IT SEEMS PRETTY IMPORTANT, SO I GUESS MAYBE Y'ALL SHOULD BE AWARE OF IT?

RUBBISH!

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EXCUSE ME?

RUBBISH!!

SPHINXES WENT EXTINCT DURING THE GREAT WAR!

IT'S BEEN HUNDREDS OF YEARS SINCE ANYONE HAS EVEN SEEN A SPHINX AND NOW ONE JUST SHOWS UP?

NEXT YOU'LL BE TELLING US DRAGONS AREN'T EXTINCT, EITHER!

YES, WELL, UM.

ABOUT THAT...

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LONG AGO...

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE BOTH HAD TO COME OUT HERE FOR THIS.

SOMEONE REALLY SHOULD BE WATCHING THE SHOP

THE MESSAGE EXPRESSLY REQUESTED BOTH OF US.

I'M ASSUMING IT IS A TASK WE CANNOT DO ON OUR OWN.

IF IT'S ANOTHER PERSON WORKED-UP ABOUT HOW AND FOR WHOM WE MAKE MEDALLIONS, I AM GOING TO PACK UP AND LEAVE THIS COUNTRY.

DID YOU SEE THAT BOY KESTER TRIED AGAIN TO MOVE UP THE QUEUE AFTER WE TOLD HIM TO WAIT?

THIS SORT OF FALSE SENSE OF SUPREMACY IS EXACTLY WHY MEDALLIONS SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO ALL SPECIES.

I COULDN'T AGREE MORE.

THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING TO MY INVITATION.

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PLEASE DO NOT BE FRIGHTENED, 'TIS NOT A TRAP.

IF NOT A TRAP, THEN WHY INVITE US ALL THE WAY OUT HERE?

I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT SPHINXES WERE CLEVER

JUST HOW WOULD I BE ABLE TO MAKE A PERSONAL VISIT, HMM?

EVEN IN YOUR PRECIOUS TOWN FULL OF CREATURES, I AM SURELY NOT WELCOME.

OHHH...

...I KNOW WHAT THIS IS.

WORD HAS SPREAD. BECAUSE WE MAKE MEDALLIONS FOR THE NEMEANS, YOU THINK YOU SHOULD HAVE THEM, TOO.

THERE'S THAT SPHINX CLEVERNESS I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT!

YOU MAKE MEDALLIONS FOR THE MEDALLIONLESS, AND WHAT ARE DRAGONS IF NOT THE MOST IN NEED OF PROTECTION FROM HUMANS?

DRAGONSLAYING IS MORE POPULAR THAN EVER AMONG HUMANS. I'M IN GRAVE DANGER JUST MEETING YOU OUT IN THE OPEN.

WHAT IF SOME GLORY-HUNGRY HUMAN SEES ME?

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IF IT'S SYMPATHY YOU ARE TRYING TO INSPIRE, YOU ARE FAILING, DRAGON.

DRAGONS ARE THE REASON MEDALLIONS ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY!

THE DRAGONS ON THE MAINLAND ARE ROUTINELY DESTROYING OUR MINTS AND ATTACKING OUR PEOPLE!

YOUR PEOPLE DENY US THE PROTECTION YOU SO WILLINGLY GIVE OUT TO OTHERS!

WE NEED THOSE MEDALLIONS!

SO YOUR SOLUTION IS TO KILL US?

IF YOU DON'T GET MEDALLIONS THEN NOBODY ELSE WILL?

I HAVE KILLED NO SPHINXES!

WOSRET, PLEASE.

WE CAN AT LEAST WEAR HER OUT..

YOU WILL MAKE MEDALLIONS FOR MY FAMILY OR ELSE—

OR ELSE??

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MADAM, WE DO *NOT* TAKE KINDLY TO *THREATS*–

–NOR DO WE *TAKE ORDERS* FROM THE *LIKES* OF YOU!

THE *LIKES* OF *ME*?

I KNEW IT, I *KNEW* IT!

THE *OTHERS* SAID THE BRITISH SPHINXES WERE *DIFFERENT* THAN THE REST OF YOUR *WRETCHED* LOT, BUT *NO!*

YOU ARE JUST AS *ARROGANT* AS THE REST!

MADAM, *PLEASE*. THIS WILL *NOT RESOLVE* ANYTHING.

NO, YOU'VE MADE IT *QUITE CLEAR* WHAT YOU *THINK* OF THE *"LESSER SPECIES."*

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WOOMPH!

FWOOMPH

SHOOF

THAT WENT BETTER THAN I THOUGHT IT WOULD.

WELL..

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CURRENTLY

UUGGHHHH.

HOW MUCH LONGER ARE THEY GONNA BEEEEEEEE...

WHO EVEN ARE THESE YAHOOS?

WHY ARE WE OUT HERE AND NOT IN THERE?

IT'S THE COUNCIL, MATE.

DON'T WORRY, THEY'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO

WE'RE NOT CHILDREN, JIM!

[redacted] FRIENDS!

I DON'T SEE WHY WE AREN'T PART OF WHATEVER IS HAPPENING IN THERE!

THAT'S JUST THE WAY IT'S DONE.

I YARD

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THE COUNCIL DECIDES WHAT'S BEST FOR ALL OF US.

AND Y'ALL JUST DO WHAT THEY SAY?

WITHOUT QUESTION?

WE KNOW WHO ALL THE MEMBERS ARE–

–THEY WOULDN'T BE ON THE COUNCIL IF THEY WEREN'T *TRUSTED* TO DO THEIR JOB.

I'M SURE THEY'RE LETTIN MEESH HAVE HER SAY, THEY WOULDN'T ASK HER TO DO ANYTHING SHE WOULDN'T WANT TO DO.

BUT WHATEVER HAPPENS IN THERE WILL AFFECT *ALL* OF US!

WE SHOULD BE IN THERE!

IF THEY NEED US. THEY'LL CALL FOR US. GREG.

DO YOU THINK SHE EVEN NEEDS US ANYMORE?

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NOW WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT, MATE?

YARD CARD

I DUNNO.

I MEAN, YOU SAW HER WHEN SHE CAME UP FROM THE CAVE

SHE'S ON, LIKE AN *ENTIRELY DIFFERENT* PLANE OF EXISTENCE NOW.

ME: A GOAT

POWERS: GOAT

HER A GOD?? POWERS: ALL?

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP HER THROUGH ALL THIS?

THIS IS MORE THAN NOT BEING IN THE MEETING, ISN'T IT, BUDDY?

I DON'T WANT TO LOSE HER.

HAVE YOU *TALKED* ABOUT THIS WITH HER?

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO SAY?

"HEY MICHELLE, I KNOW YOU JUST UNLOCKED ALL THE *SECRETS OF YOUR MYSTERIOUS ALL-POWERFUL RACE* AND YOU'RE LIKE THE MOST *MAGICALLY POWERFUL BEING IN THE KNOWN WORLD* OR WHATEVER..."

"... BUT CAN WE TALK *ABOUT MY FEELINGS* FOR A HOT SECOND?"

IT'S NOT LIKE I KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT *MAGIC*

I'M JUST GONNA BE *DEAD WEIGHT.*

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GREG, I–

MICHELLE!!

ARE YOU OKAY?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

WHAT DID THEY SAY?

UM, I GUESS..

... I'M, UH.. I'M GOING TO..

GREAT NEWS, MY FRIENDS!!

IT HAS BEEN DECIDED IN THE GREAT WISDOM OF THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS THAT MICHELLE SHOULD STAY WITHIN THE SAFETY OF THE AVALON'S WALLS!

FOR THE TIME BEING.

WHAT??

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SHE CAN'T STAY HERE!

WE'RE GOING BACK TO AMERICA SOON!

SORRY, KIDDOS.

BUT IF YER FRIEND IS RIGHT ABOUT HAVING DEMONS AFTER HER, THE AVALON WILL BE THE SAFEST OPTION, FOR NOW.

THEY SAID THEY HAD THIS GIANT LIBRARY THAT COULD HELP ME PIECE TOGETHER ALL THE INFORMATION I GOT FROM THE CAVE, MAYBE.

AND THE AVALON HAS PROTECTIONS AGAINST SOME OF THE MORE MALEVOLENT CREATURES OUT THERE.

IF DEMONS ARE INDEED AFTER HER, THE SPELLS AND WARDS HERE WILL INSURE THEY CAN'T TOUCH HER.

OKAY, SO WHY CAN'T WE JUST CAST THOSE WARDS ON HER SO SHE CAN GO HOME?

IT'S NOT A PERMANENT SOLUTION.

BUT IT'LL GIVE US TIME TO RESEARCH OTHER OPTIONS. CONTACT OTHER AVALONS.

WAIT, SO EVERYONE WILL KNOW ABOUT HER??

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IF MORE PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT HER, WON'T SHE BE IN *MORE* DANGER?

WHAT ABOUT *COLLEGE*?

SHE CAN STUDY HERE.

AND PERHAPS SHE COULD ALSO AID IN FILLING IN THE *MANY GAPS* IN OUR WRITTEN HISTORIES WITH THE HELP OF HER *VISIONS*.

WHAT ABOUT HER *FAMILY*? WHAT ABOUT *US*??

YEAH, WE CAN'T JUST *LEAVE* HER HERE!

SHE'S NOT A *PRISONER* OR ANYTHING.

SHE CAN *MAKE* HER *OWN* DECISIONS.

YOU AREN'T JUST GOING TO LET THEM TELL YOU WHAT TO DO, ARE YOU MICHELLE?

YOU CAN'T BE CONSIDERING THIS, MICHELLE.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, MICHELLE?

MICHELLE?

SHELLY?

MEESH?

I DON'T KNOW!!

I DON'T...

KNOW...

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I DON'T KNOW ABOUT COLLEGE–

–OR WHERE I'M GOING TO LIVE–

–OR WHAT I'M GOING TO TELL MY MOM–

–OR IF I'M GOING TO GET DRAGGED TO HELL BY DEMONS!!

JUST BECAUSE I HAD SOME SORT OF MAGIC EPIPHANY DOESN'T MEAN I SUDDENLY KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS!!

I'M DOING MY BEST!

I'M TRYING REALLY HARD TO KEEP IT ALL TOGETHER!

BUT I'M SO.. TIRED!

I'M SO, SO TIRED, Y'ALL.

I GOTTA..

I GOTTA GO.

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LONG AGO...

I JUST *THINK* WE COULD HAVE HANDLED THAT A LITTLE ***BETTER***, IS ALL.

DON'T TELL ME YOU ARE CONSIDERING *MAKING* A MEDALLION FOR THAT ***MONSTER***, ARE YOU?

SHE WAS ***SCARED***, WORRET

SHE ***THREATENED*** US, JOCASTA.

I JUST CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER IF THE WHOLE ***WAR*** ON THE MAINLAND COULD HAVE BEEN *AVOIDED* IF WE HAD NEVER *DENIED* DRAGONS MEDALLIONS IN THE ***FIRST*** PLACE

OH, SO THE DRAGONS COULD GO AND *WREAK HAVOC* ON THE WORLD IN A WONDERFULLY ***DISCREET*** HUMAN FORM?

I DON'T THINK IT'S AS ***CLEAR CUT*** AS WE-

OH THANK THE GREAT AGATHOS DAIMON!

THERE YOU ARE!

PHINEAS? WHAT-

IS THAT FIRE?

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YOUR SHOP! THE MINT!

JOCASTA, DO YOU HAVE THE STRENGTH?

QUICK, TO ME.

WOAH.

WHAT HAPPENED HERE??

THEY CAME OUT OF NOWHERE!

I DIDN'T THINK THERE WERE STILL DRAGONS IN ENGLAND, AND THEN ONE JUST FALLS OUT OF THE SKY!

A DRAGON DID THIS?

A GREAT BLOODY WHITE DRAGON!

I WAS SURE THEY WERE GOING TO DESTROY THE WHOLE TOWN, BUT THEY JUST WENT AFTER YOUR PLACE AND FLEW OFF!

THANK GOODNESS I SAVED THE EGG THING, RIGHT?

I'M HELPFUL, YEAH?

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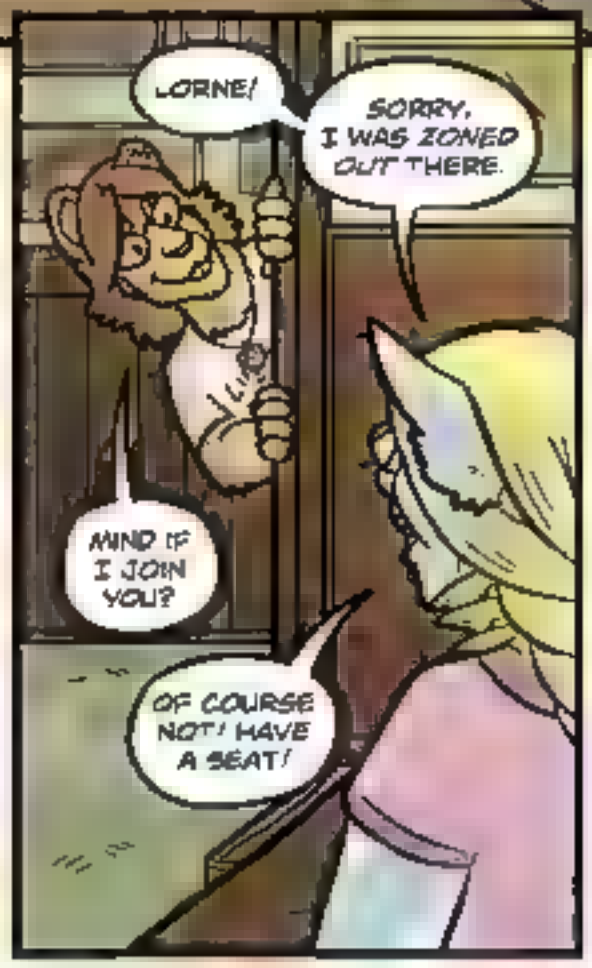
STEREO PHONIC

MERIAL! HULLO!
PLONK
OH!


LORNE!
SORRY, I WAS ZONED OUT THERE.
MIND IF I JOIN YOU?
OF COURSE NOT! HAVE A SEAT!

S JIM HERE TOO?
OH. NO.
HE'S BACK AT HIS HOUSE WITH RAVI, LEARNING MAGIC OR SOMETHING.

I HAVEN'T SEEN MORE THAN A GLIMPSE OF MICHELLE IN THE LAST FEW DAYS—
—AND GREG IS OFF SULKING.
NOBODY'S BEEN VERY KEEN ON EXPLORING THE AVALON WITH ME.

OH, THAT'S RIGHT!

JIM SAID YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH OF AN AVALON BACK HOME YEH?

I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY NON-HUMANS IN ONE PLACE!

IT'S INCREDIBLE!

OH!

HEY, YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO FINALLY ANSWER THIS FOR ME!

WHAT'S THE COLLECTIVE WORD FOR ALL OF US?

ALL THE ONES WE USE COMPARE US TO HUMANS. "NON-HUMAN" LEAVES A BAD TASTE IN MY MOUTH.

ASK THREE PEOPLE THAT QUESTION AND YOU'LL GET DIFFERENT ANSWERS. JUV.

OI!

DERMOT! REMY! ORDER OF CHIPS FOR THE TABLE, WILL YA?

I USUALLY SAY "MYTHICAL COMMUNITY."

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"MYTHICAL" MAKES IT SOUND LIKE WE DON'T EXIST, THOUGH.

WHAT ABOUT .. AVALONIANS?

VERY FEW OF US ACTUALLY LIVE IN AVALONS.

ALSO, THAT NAME IS TERRIBLE.

JUST THE WORST

OH, LOOK WHO'S TALKING, MR. MYTHICAL COMMUNITY.

PLEASE, MR MYTHICAL COMMUNITY WAS MY FATHER.

YOU MAY CALL ME LORNE.

HAHAHA SNERK HAHA HEE HE SNORT HA HA

HEY, I AIN'T GOT NOFFIN' ELSE GOING ON TODAY, I CAN SHOW YOU AROUND!

I KNOW ALL THE INS AND OUTS OF THIS PLACE.

REALLY? THAT'D BE AMAZING!

OF COURSE I'D LOVE TO SHOW YOU THE SIGHTS, AS IT WERE

I CAN SEE WHY JIM LIKES YOU SO MUCH.

COUGH COUGH

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WHAT?
Cough
HAS HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT ME???
OH?
WHAT HAS HE SAID?
Cough
Cough
HOLY COW, RELAX!
SORRY
Cough
Cough
HE'S JUST BEEN GONE A LONG TIME, IS ALL.
YOU TWO HAVE BEEN FRIENDS FOR AGES, RIGHT?
SINCE WE WAS FIVE, YEH.
HIM BEING IN AMERICA IS THE LONGEST WE'VE EVER BEEN APART.
YOU'VE KNOWN THAT IDIOT FOR THAT LONG AND YOU STILL GET THIS FLUSTERED AT ANY LITTLE MENTION OF HIM?
WELL UM. I MEAN. I JUST
IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL ANY BETTER, HE TALKS ABOUT YOU ALL THE TIME.
HE DOES??
OF COURSE HE DOES, YOU DONGLE!

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I LOVE SEEING YOU TWO TOGETHER, YOU BOTH JUST *LIGHT UP* AROUND EACH OTHER.

IT'S CUTE!

BUT AREN'T YOU AND JIM, .DATING NOW?

TOGETHER?

OH *HECK* YEAH. I CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF THAT DORK!

SORRY IF. I DON'T MEAN TO MAKE THINGS *AWKWARD* BETWEEN YOU AND HIM.., OR ANYTHING.

AIN'T YOU *WITH* SOMEONE, THOUGH?

I THINK I REMEMBER JIM MENTIONING A *GIRLFRIEND?*

OH. I GUESS I HAVEN'T *TOLD* HIM YET.

LEAH AND I ARE..

LIFE AIN'T NO!

JIM JIM JIM

OH NO. I'M SORRY TO PRY. YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL A RELATIVE STRANGER ABOUT IT IF YOU DON'T WANT!

I GUESS WE ARE STILL KIND OF STRANGERS, HUH?

JIM'S TOLD ME SO MUCH ABOUT YOU. I FORGET THAT WE ONLY MET A FEW DAYS AGO!

IT'S NICE TO HAVE YOU ONE-ON-ONE, GET TO KNOW YOU RATHER THAN BE TOLD ABOUT YOU.

HEH HEH. I'M SORRY HE TALKS ABOUT ME SO MUCH.

TO BE CLEAR THERE'S NOTHING BETWEEN US.

...NOT ANYMORE.

SORRY IF I'M MAKING THINGS AWKWARD

LOOK.

I THINK YOU AND JIM NEED TO HAVE A SERIOUS CONVERSATION ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS.

IT'S CLEAR YOU'RE BOTH CRAZY ABOUT EACH OTHER.

I KNOW IT DIDN'T WORK OUT THE FIRST TIME. BUT MAYBE Y'ALL COULD TRY AGAIN?

I'M SORRY. WHAT?

WE'D HAVE TO *TALK* TO JIM ABOUT IT, OF COURSE.

COMMUNICATION IS ALWAYS THE MOST *IMPORTANT* PART OF ANY RELATIONSHIP.

AND IT MIGHT NOT WORK OUT!

JIM'S GOT A *LOT* ON HIS PLATE RIGHT NOW WITH ALL THE *'SUDDEN NEW MAGIC POWERS'* STUFF, SO WE WOULDN'T WANT TO OVERWHELM HIM.

BUT I THINK THIS IS *IMPORTANT*. DON'T YOU?

ANOTHER PHRASE I'VE HEARD PEOPLE USE FOR A COLLECTIVE NOUN IS *'MYTHICS.'*

LIFE AIN'T NO

LIFE AIN'T NO

OH, THAT'S EVEN *WORSE!*

MIGHT AS WELL JUST CALL US *"A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO DON'T EXIST"* OR WHATVER!

"THE FANTASTIC POPULATION!"

"ANOTHER HUMAN-CENTRIC TERM."

"HOMO FANTASTICUS."

"NON-HUMANS."

THAT ONE'S PROBABLY THE EASIEST

UGH, BUT IT *SUCKS!*

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LONG AGO...

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT, IT'S ALL GONE...

AGAIN, THANK GOODNESS I SAVED THE EGG!

HOW AND WHY DO YOU HAVE THAT, ANYWAY?

GOOD JOB GUARDING THIS REALLY IMPORTANT AND RARE MAGIC ITEM, PHINEAS!"

"YOU'RE RIGHT, THANK YOU, PHINEAS."

YES, THANK YOU PHINEAS.

WE SHOULD HAVE TAKEN MORE PRECAUTIONS IN PROTECTING THE EGG.

WAS THE DRAGON AFTER THE EGG OR DID THEY JUST WANT TO DESTROY YOUR HOME?

LITTLE BIT OF BOTH, I THINK.

THIS WILL TAKE AGES TO REBUILD

IF WE REBUILD THEY'LL JUST KEEP COMING.

IT WOULDN'T EVEN HELP IF WE AGREED TO MAKE MEDALLIONS FOR THEM AT THIS POINT.

HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE?

I SEE IT EVERY NIGHT IN MY DREAM VISIONS.

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SURELY YOU CAN DO SOMETHING!?

YOU'RE SPHINXES, YOU CAN--

WE AREN'T ALL-POWERFUL, PHINEAS.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE SPHINX'S SHARED POWER IS GOING TOWARD THE FIGHTING ON THE MAINLAND.

WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH AVAILABLE TO US TO DO SOMETHING LIKE FIGHT OFF DRAGONS ALONE

WE ARE LOSING THIS WAR.

I CAN'T SEE IT ANY OTHER WAY THEY WON'T STOP UNTIL WE'RE ALL DEAD.

WHAT IF THEY THINK THEY'VE WON?

THINK WHAT?

LET THEM THINK WE'RE DEAD.

IF THEY THINK WE'RE ALL DEAD, THEY'LL STOP, RIGHT?

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WE CAN USE THE MEDALLIONS, LIVE AS HUMANS.

THEY CAN'T FIND US IF WE DON'T USE OUR MAGIC OR BRING ANY ATTENTION TO OURSELVES.

THEN WHEN WE ARE STRONGER WE CAN TRY AGAIN.

THAT COULD TAKE A VERY LONG TIME.

THE ONLY WAY TO TRULY HIDE IS IF WE LIVED COMPLETELY HUMAN.

ANY USE OF OUR MAGIC WOULD BE LIKE A BEACON.

IT'S NOT A PERFECT PLAN. BUT HIDING IS BETTER THAN THE TOTAL EXTINCTION YOUR VISIONS FORETELL. ISN'T IT?

HOW WOULD WE EVEN DO IT?

THE MEDALLIONS WOULD GIVE US A MORE HUMAN LIFESPAN.

WE DON'T EVEN KNOWN HOW MEDALLIONS WORK ACROSS MULTIPLE GENERATIONS.

HOW CAN WE EVEN BE SURE OUR DESCENDENTS WOULD STAY HIDDEN, IF IT CAME TO THAT?

AND THE PHOENIX EGG!

THE MAGIC RADIATING OFF IT COULD LEAD THEM RIGHT TO US!

WE CAN'T KEEP IT BUT THE DAMAGE IT COULD DO IF IT GOT INTO THE WRONG HANDS...

I THINK I HAVE A SOLUTION TO THAT PARTICULAR PROBLEM.

IN FACT, I'M SURE I CAN HELP!

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WAIT.

THE CROW?

PHINEAS' PET CROW WAS YOU?

WHY *ELSE* WOULD THERE BE *SO MANY* IMAGES OF THIS FORM DOWN HERE?

WE WERE *RARELY* SEPARATED.

DEAREST PHINEAS WAS *GREAT FUN*, WHEREVER HE WENT I FOLLOWED.

SO YER REALLY A *BIRD*, MATE?

I AM *WHATEVER* FORM I AM, CHILD.

A YAKSHA *SIMPLY IS!*

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DURING MY TIME WITH PHINEAS, I FOUND THE SHAPE OF A CROW WAS *PERFECT* FOR WHAT I NEEDED!

THINGS WERE VERY *DIFFERENT* BACK THEN.

Hop Hop Hop

DIFFERENT, AND YET SO MUCH THE *SAME!*

AS A CROW I WAS ABLE TO *OBSERVE* AND *TRAVEL* WITH PHINEAS WITHOUT ATTRACTING *ADDED* ATTENTION.

IF I STAYED *QUIET*, MOST WOULD JUST *ASSUME* I WAS A MUNDANE CROW! IT WAS VERY *USEFUL!*

I WISH IT WERE USEFUL NOW.

OH PHINEAS..

HE WAS *SUCH A DEAR* FRIEND.

I SEE *SO MUCH* OF HIM IN THE TWO OF YOU. BUT IT IS STILL NOT THE SAME

Stop

Hop

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TIME GOES BY SO QUICKLY. AND A MORTAL'S TIME UPON THIS PLANE IS SO LIMITED.

IF I HADN'T RETURNED HOME TO INDIA WHEN I DID. MAYBE I COULD HAVE KNOWN PHINEAS' CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

WHY DID YOU LEAVE?

YAKSHA AREN'T MEANT TO DIRECTLY INTERFERE WITH MORTALS.

I WAS CALLED HOME BY MY KIN AND WAS ADVISED TO TURN INWARD AND MEDITATE ON MY ACTIONS.

I SUPPOSE I...LOST TRACK OF TIME.

HOWEVER!

THE RESULT OF MY SELF-REFLECTIONS WAS THAT I HAD ACTED APPROPRIATELY I HAD MADE NO MISTAKES!

OH. WHAT A SHOCKER.

SO I RETURNED TO ENGLAND AT ONCE!

BUT SO MANY YEARS HAD PASSED.

IS THAT WHY YOU'VE NEVER REALLY TALKED TO US UNTIL NOW?

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I WAS TRYING TO STAY OUT OF THE WAY, AS MY KIND ARE SUPPOSED TO!

I SAW THAT JIM HERE STILL BORE THE GIFT, SO I ASSUMED EVERYTHING HAD WORKED OUT AS I HAD PREDICTED!

NOT TO DISPARAGE YOUR RELATIVES, JIMOTHY, BUT I WAS VERY SHOCKED TO FIND OUT THAT THE PHOENIX EGG HAD SURVIVED FOR SO LONG WITHOUT THE AID OF MY POWERS!

BUT THAT IS WHY WE ARE HERE RIGHT NOW!

I WISH TO HELP YOU BOTH TAP INTO YOUR ABILITIES!

PRETTY SURE I'M A LOST CAUSE ON THAT FRONT, MATE.

NONSENSE!

YOU JUST NEED TO LEARN HOW TO USE YOUR POWER!

YOU MUST FOSTER A STRONG CONNECTION TO YOUR PRANA!

MY WHAT NOW?

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PRANA!

WHAT ARE OTHER WORDS FOR IT

CHI?

ORENDA?

MANA?

OD?

IT'S LIKE... IT'S LIFE ENERGY, YES?

IT IS THE VERY CORE OF WHAT MORTALS THINK OF AS MAGIC!

PHYSICAL ENERGY IS SUBJECT TO PHYSICAL LAWS OF NATURE. YES?

WELL, LIFE ENERGY HAS ITS OWN RULES!

I AM SURE IF YOUR HUMAN FRIEND TIM WERE HERE HE WOULD DESCRIBE HIS SORCERY IN A SIMILAR MANNER.

SO WHY CAN I DO IT BUT JIM CAN'T?

I WOULD POSIT THAT YOU HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GRASP YOUR MAGIC FAR EASIER THAN YOUR BROTHER BECAUSE YOU ARE MUCH YOUNGER THAN HE IS.

A YOUNG MIND HAS A FAR EASIER TIME WITH NEW CONCEPTS AND IDEAS THAN AN OLDER ONE.

CREEPING CHRIST I'M ONLY 20.

I AIN'T ANCIENT OVER HERE

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PRECISELY WHY I ASKED FOR BOTH OF YOU TO BE HERE TODAY!

I BELIEVE COLIN'S PRESENCE WILL HELP YOU CONNECT WITH YOUR ABILITIES.

I DID NOT INITIALLY INTEND FOR THERE TO BE MORE THAN ONE FINN WITH THE GIFT AT A TIME. BUT AS IT HAPPENS YOU BOTH HAVE RELATED MAGIC THAT SHOULD WORK IN TANDEM!

UGGGHHHHH...

I HATE THIS.

I HATE THIS?

I HATE THIS.

THE LAST THING I EVER WANTED WAS TO HAVE TO LISTEN TO YOU RAMBLE ON FOR THE REST OF ME LIFE.

WATER AND NATURE ARE CLOSELY LINKED

WATER IS ESSENTIAL FOR NATURE TO THRIVE!

I SUSPECT THAT WITH FULLY-REALIZED ABILITIES THAT YOU, COLIN, WILL BE ABLE TO INCREASE THE POWER OF JIM'S ABILITY EXPONENTIALLY!

OH, NOW I WISH MY DEAREST PHINEAS HAD HAD A SIBLING SO I COULD HAVE DONE THIS ON PURPOSE!

THIS WILL BE SO MUCH FUN!

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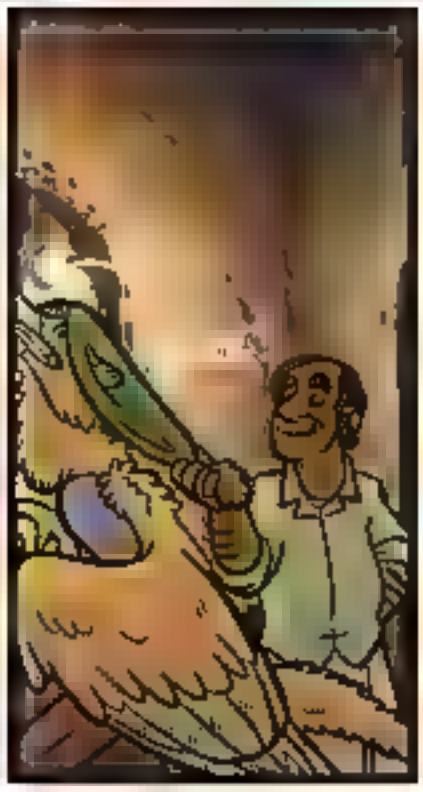

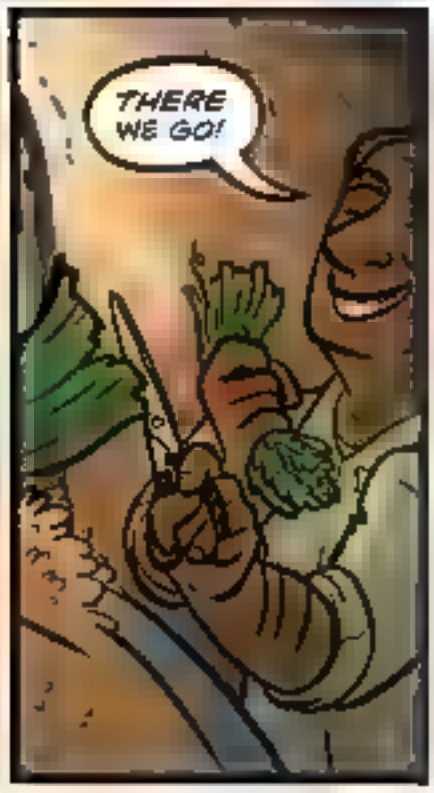

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HAVING CONTROL OF AN ELEMENT ISN'T VERY USEFUL IF YOU HAVE NO ACCESS TO THAT ELEMENT!

WHAT SORT OF GIFT WOULD THAT HAVE BEEN?

I THOUGHT IT TERRIBLY CLEVER TO EXPRESS THE GIFT VIA YOUR SPECIES' CHARACTERISTIC MANES.

SO STRIKING!

YEH, SUPER CLEVER AND NOT SCARRING IN ANY WAY IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING.

—*

AND WHEN YOUR MANE GROWS IN, COLIN, IT WILL BE THE SAME AS JIM'S!

WOT, MADE OF PLANTS?

OH.

NOW THAT WE HAVE OUR ELEMENTS, LET'S BEGIN!

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IF YOU TWO *TRULY* WISH TO *DISAPPEAR* FROM THE DRAGONS, YOU *MUST* SEPARATE.

TWO SPHINXES IN *ONE SPOT* IS TOO MUCH OF A *DRAW* FOR ANYTHING THAT CAN SENSE MAGICAL ENERGY, EVEN IF YOU'RE *DISGUISED*.

I STILL HAVE CONNECTIONS IN *EGYPT* THOSE UNKNOWN TO OTHER SPHINXES.

I CAN FIND A PLACE AND START OVER.

I KNOW OF AN ISLAND OFF THE COAST OF GREECE THAT SPECIALIZES IN GIVING NON-HUMANS NEW LIVES.

I WILL SEE WHERE THAT TAKES ME.

WE'RE *REALLY* DOING THIS?

JUST.. *ABANDONING* OUR KIND LIKE THIS?

MY VISIONS HAVE *NEVER* BEEN *WRONG*. WOSRET

WE *WILL* DIE.

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THIS WAR ENDS WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SPHINXES.

IF WE DO NOT HIDE, THEY WILL KILL US.

WE ARE NOT ABANDONING OUR KIND, WE ARE ASSURING OUR SURVIVAL.

WELL...

BE THAT AS IT MAY-

I STILL DON'T THINK WE SHOULD LEAVE THE EGG..

WITH PHINEAS.

AW. DON'T BE LIKE THAT, WOSRET!

I KNOW HOW I CAN COME OFF BUT I'M A RESPONSIBLE CREATURE!

OR, I CAN BE!

I HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO BE RESPONSIBLE!

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RESPONSIBILITY OR NOT, YOU'RE JUST AN OPINICUS.

HOW WILL YOU KEEP THE EGG SAFE IF SOMETHING MAGICAL TRIES TO GET AT IT?

I HAVE A SOLUTION FOR THIS AS WELL!

RAVI?

RAVI??

FOOMPH!

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RAVI?

A GIFT!

NOW NO BEAST, MUNDANE OR MAGIC, SHALL BE A MATCH FOR YOU, THE GREAT PHINEAS!

AND DON'T WORRY, MY DEAREST SPHINXES—

—I SHALL KEEP PHINEAS COMPANY AND MAKE SURE THE EGG IS SAFE!

YOU HAVE MY WORD AS A YAKSHA.

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MICHELLE!

THERE YOU ARE!

KEEP OUT

OH, UH, DO YOU WANT TO BE ALONE?

I CAN GO BACK-?

OH NO, SORRY

I MEAN, YOU CAN STAY

-IF YOU WANT TO.

I KNOW I HAVEN'T BEEN EASY TO FIND LATELY

I'VE JUST BEEN-

-I DON'T KNOW.

THINKING.

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ARE WE SAFE TO BE OUT HERE?

I'M NOT SURE.

PROBABLY NOT.

BUT THERE'S THIS SEA MONSTER OUT HERE AND SHE'S REALLY FRIENDLY SO I'M GONNA ASSUME WE'RE OKAY.

..ARE YOU OKAY?

NO.

YEAH.

I DON'T KNOW.

IT SEEMS LIKE EVERY STEP CLOSER I GET TO FIGURING OUT WHO I AM OR WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO DO, ALL I DO IS FIND NEW OBSTACLES.

I THOUGHT I WAS DOING THE RIGHT THING BY JUST I DON'T KNOW, TRYING TO EMBRACE ALL OF THIS AND JUST GOING FOR IT.

BUT NOW I'M NOT SO SURE.

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I'M SORRY

NAH, DON'T BE.

I MEAN, I SUPPOSE THIS IS BETTER THAN CRYING OVER MY LOST HUMANITY OR DWELLING ON FUTURES THAT ARE NO LONGER A POSSIBILITY FOR ME

I'VE BEEN MEANING TO APOLOGIZE FOR THAT, ACTUALLY

APOLOGIZE? FOR WHAT?

BACK WHEN YOU TURNED.

I WASN'T VERY SYMPATHETIC. I SNAPPED AT YOU BECAUSE YOU WERE RIGHTLY UPSET ABOUT YOUR SITUATION.

NAH, I HAD NEARLY FORGOTTEN ABOUT THAT

I WAS TOO BUSY PROJECTING MY OWN FEELINGS ON THE SITUATION.

ALL I COULD THINK ABOUT WAS HOW WHEN I TURNED I BECAME THIS UGLY GOAT MONSTER WITH NO ABILITY TO LOOK FULLY HUMAN EVER AGAIN, AND YOU TURNED INTO AN ACTUAL BEAUTIFUL MYTHICAL GODDESS.

I WAS JEALOUS, I GUESS.

AND I'M SORRY.

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YOU KNOW I HATE IT WHEN YOU SAY YOU'RE UGLY, GREG.

I THINK YOU'RE VERY HANDSOME.

YOU'RE PROBABLY THE ONLY REASON I'VE BEEN ABLE TO KEEP IT TOGETHER FOR THIS LONG.

HOW DO YOU MEAN?

OH YOU KNOW WHEN THINGS GET TOO CONFUSING OR COMPLICATED...

...YOU'RE THERE

AND I CAN COUNT ON YOU.

YOU'RE ALWAYS THE FIRST ONE TO ME WHEN THINGS GET WEIRD.

AND I THINK THINGS ARE ONLY GOING TO GET WEIRDER FROM HERE ON OUT.

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I KNOW I'M STUCK HERE FOR THE TIME BEING, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE.

I'LL UNDERSTAND IF YOU WANT TO GO BACK TO MISSOURI WITH MERIAL.

I GUESS I'LL BE HERE FOR THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE.

AW JEEZE, WHAT AM I GONNA TELL MY MOM?

OH NO, SHE'S ALREADY BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH. OH NO, OH JEEZE...

SHH... IT'S OKAY, MICHELLE

THERE'S NOWHERE I'D RATHER BE THAN RIGHT HERE.

NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, I'M HERE FOR YOU.

WHAT ABOUT COLLEGE?

PFFT. I HAVEN'T EVEN PICKED A MAJOR.

I DON'T THINK COLLEGE WAS EVER THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR ME

NO SENSE IN BANKRUPTING MY MOM SO I CAN GET A DEGREE IN SOMETHING I DON'T CARE ABOUT

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IT'S A LITTLE CHEESY, BUT...

...I THINK I GOT ALL I NEEDED FROM THAT PLACE.

I'M HERE FOR THE LONG RUN, MICHELLE.

NO MATTER WHAT.

BESIDES...

...HOW MUCH WEIRDER CAN THINGS GET?

THE END!

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ALMOST REAL
VOL 1 2018 • A SPECULATIVE BIO ZINE
THANK YOU!

Convergent
Evolution!

SKIN DEEP BESTIARY

17 Skin Deep Patreon Bestiary Pages by Kory Bing
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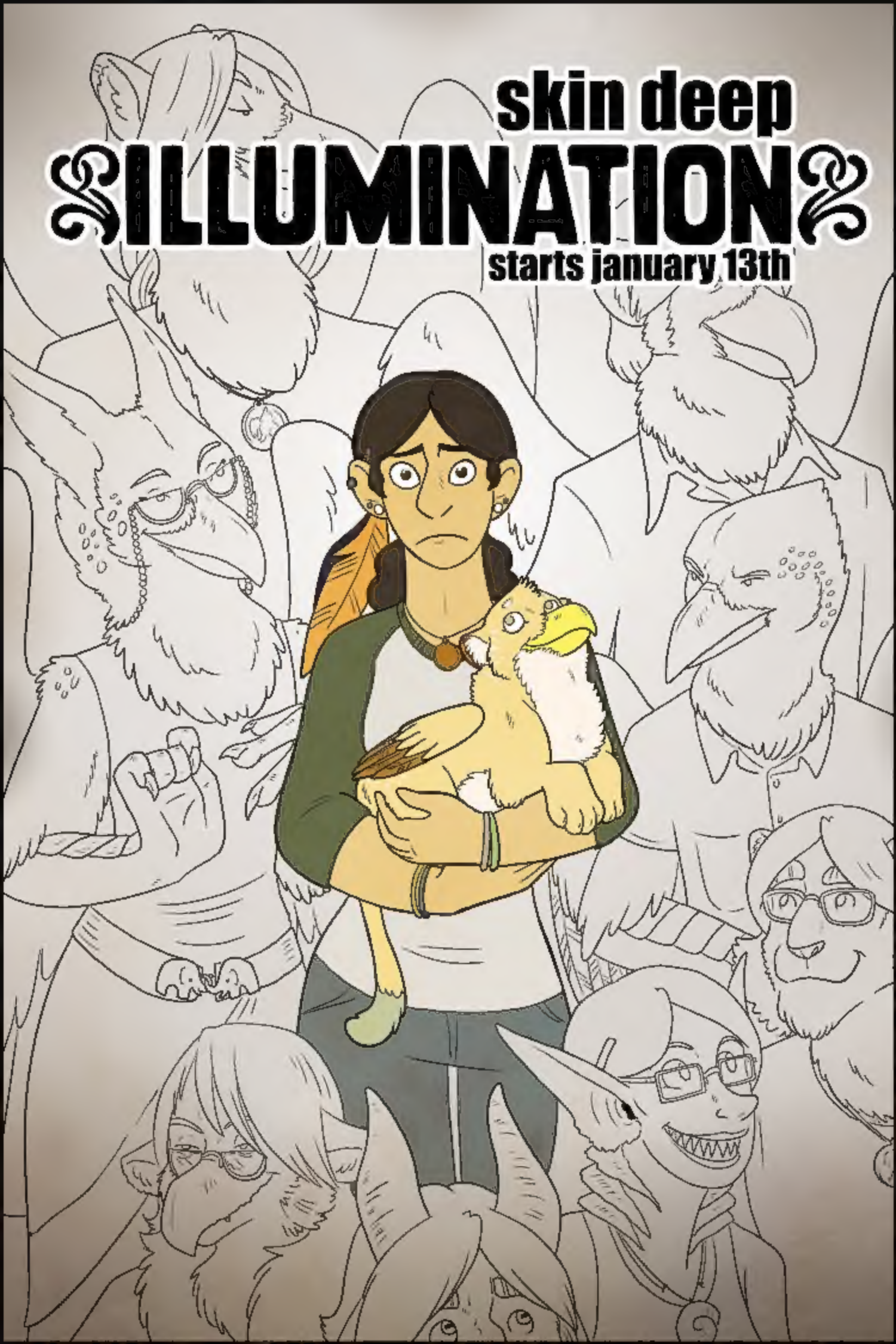
fig 1

Skin Deep Vol 3


skin deep
ILLUMINATION
starts january 13th

TRANSLATION:

I'm going to use my place of privilege to refute and deny the sufferings of those who do not have

white privilege

while at the same time

erasing

their personal and cultural history.